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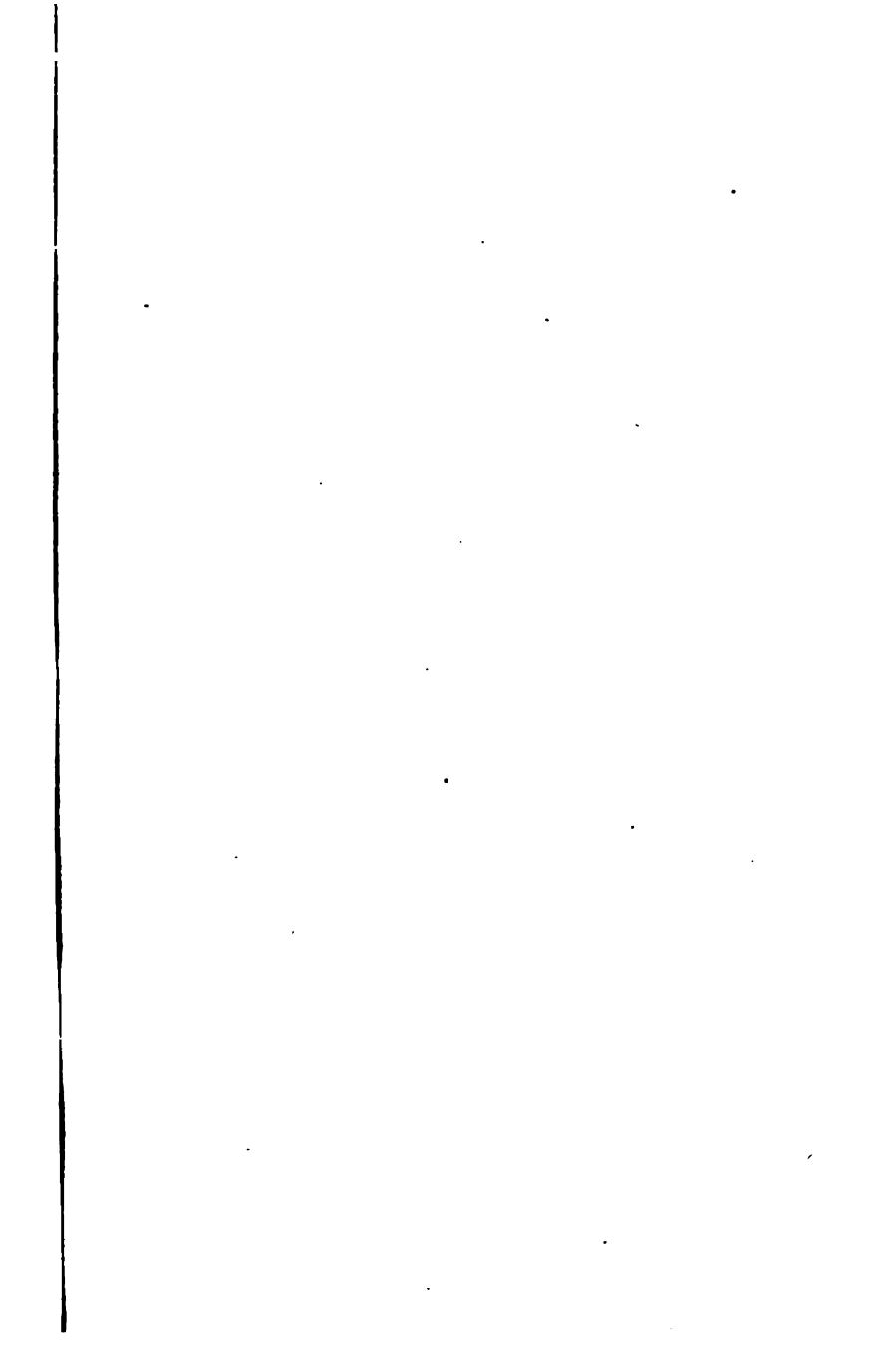
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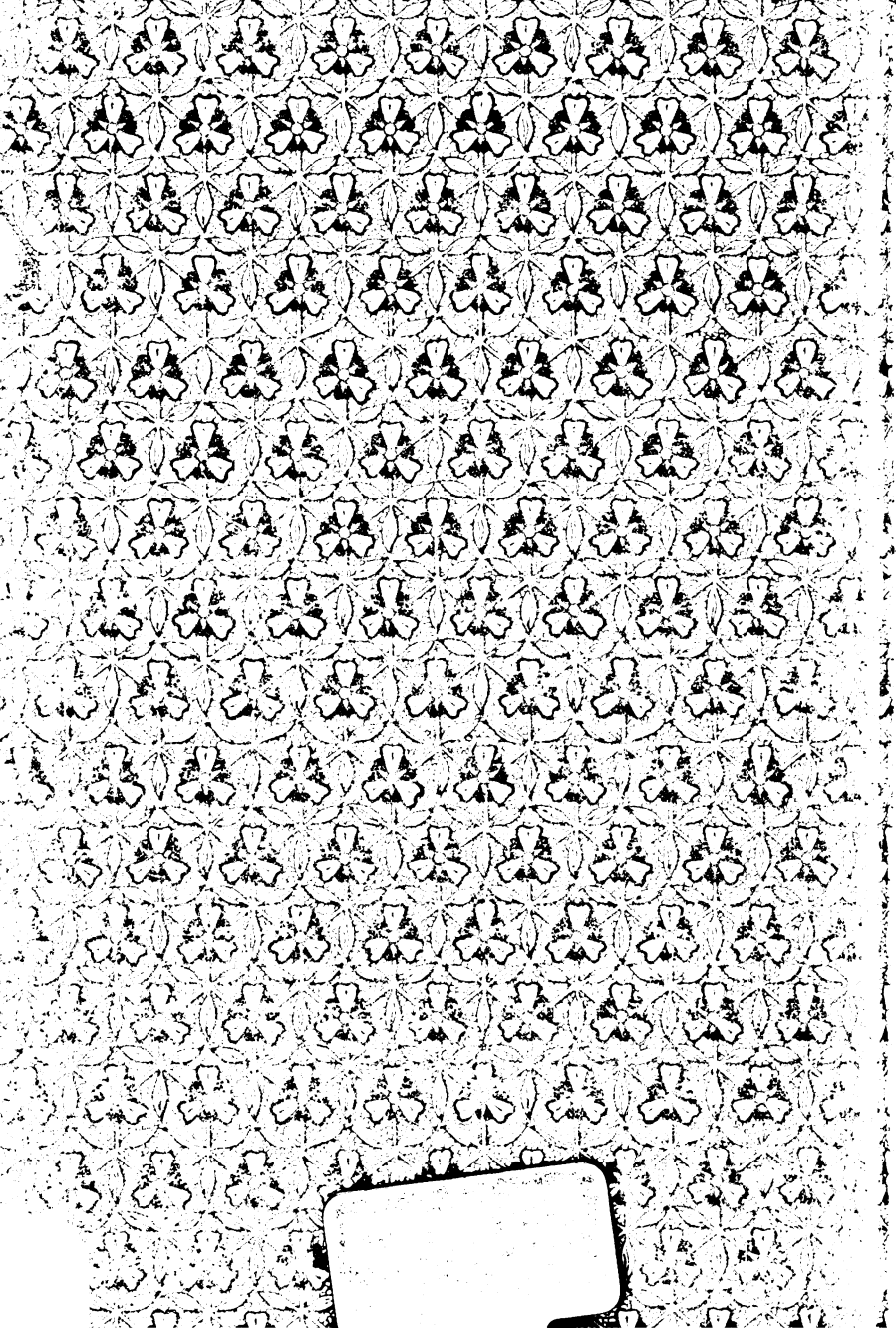
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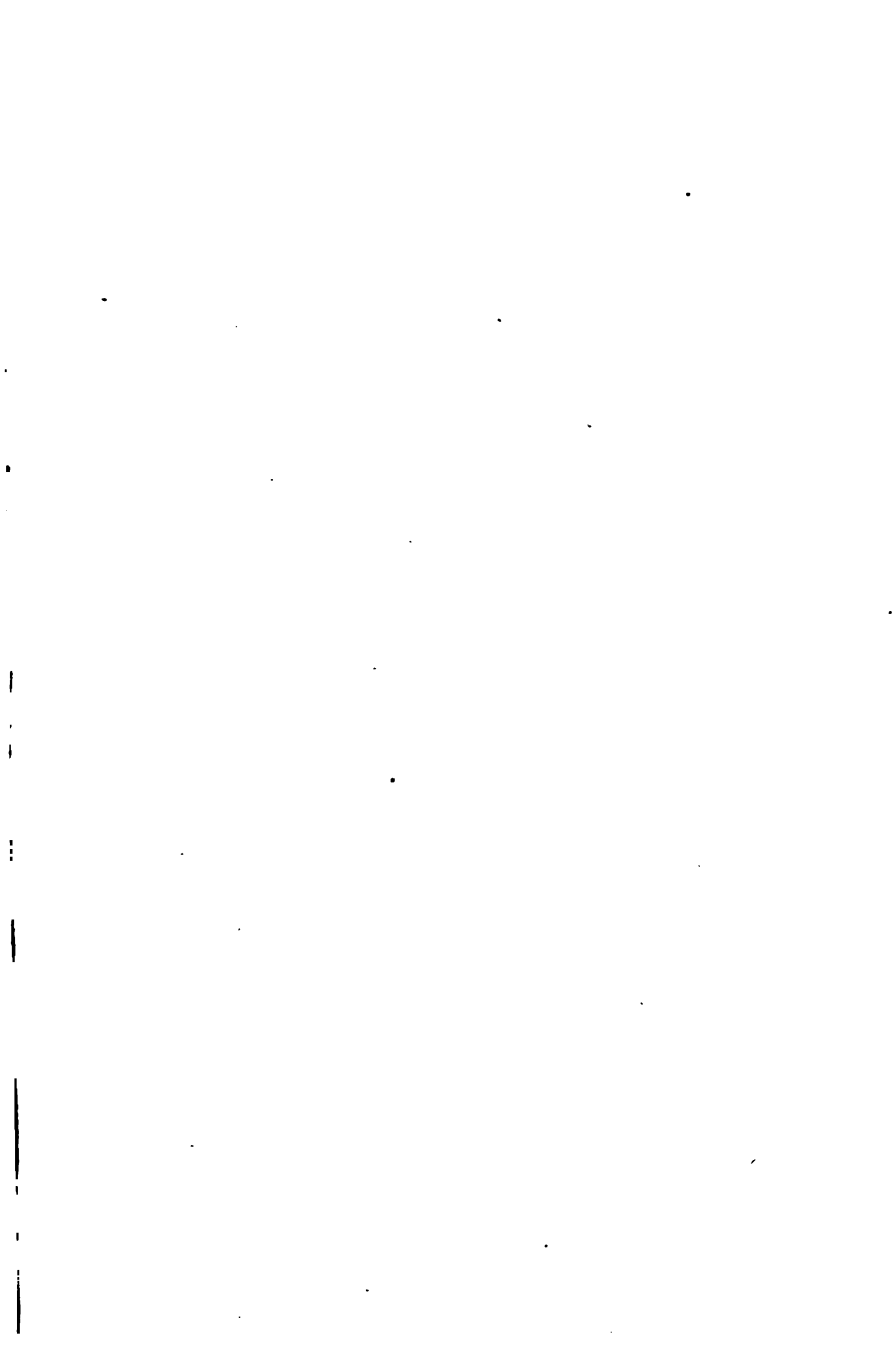
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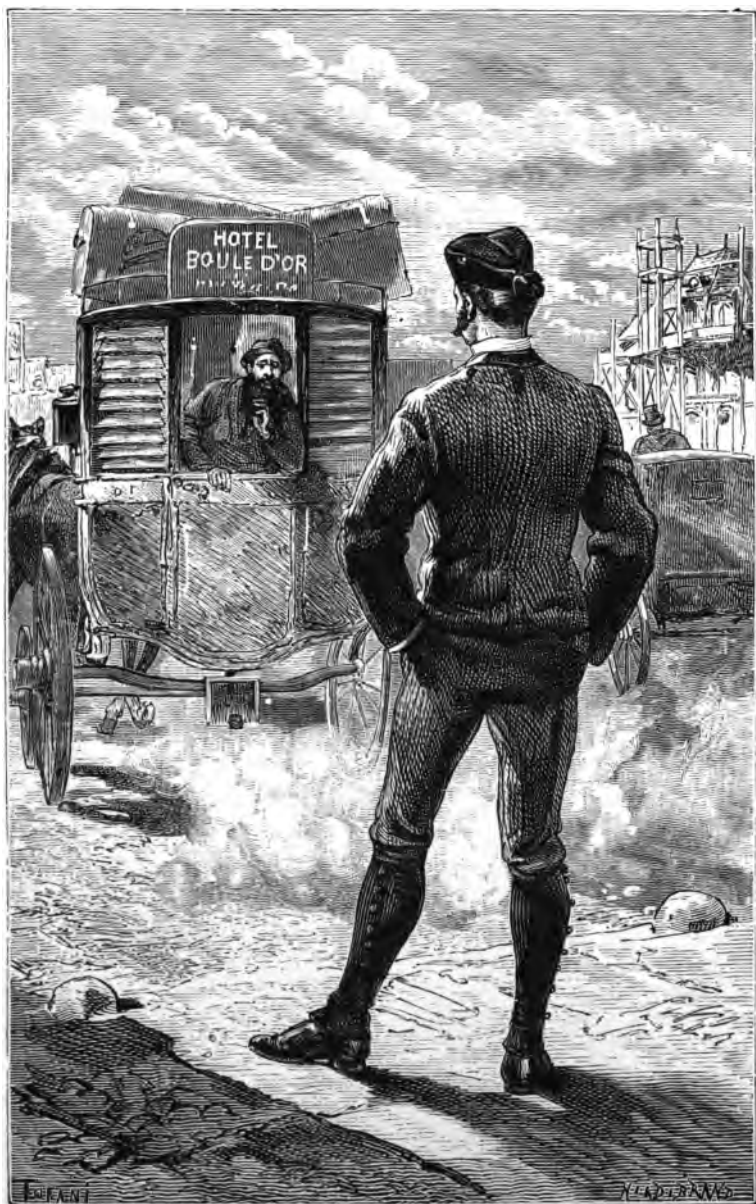












"I beg your pardon, sir!"

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# 3 OF THE TIGERS

DUIS ROUSSELET

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"I beg your pardon, sir!"

THE  
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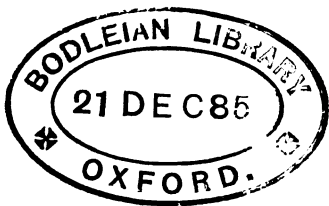
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# CONTENTS.



## CHAPTER I.

THE PASSENGER BY THE EXPRESS . . . . .	PAGE 1
--	-----------

## CHAPTER II.

LORD EVEREST . . . . .	12
------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III.

EATEN BY A LION . . . . .	19
---------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV.

DR. HOLBECK . . . . .	27
-----------------------	----

## CHAPTER V.

THE AUTHORITY ON ANTS . . . . .	37
---------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

HIS LORDSHIP'S PLANS . . . . .	47
--------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VII.

THE ARRIVAL . . . . .	55
-----------------------	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE BANQUET OF THE SHARKS . . . . .	68
-------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IX.

A RESTLESS NIGHT . . . . .	PAGE 77
----------------------------	------------

## CHAPTER X.

THE ANIMAL HOSPITAL . . . . .	87
-------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER XI.

THE MAHARAJAH'S INVITATION . . . . .	100
--------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST DAY IN THE JUNGLE . . . . .	111
---------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOCTOR'S UMBRELLA . . . . .	124
---------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE PANTHER-SLAYER . . . . .	135
------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

EVEREST'S REVENGE . . . . .	148
-----------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNEXPECTED INTRUDER . . . . .	158
----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAMP IN THE ARMOUDJAN . . . . .	167
-------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TIGERSLAYERS' CLUB . . . . .	179
----------------------------------	-----



---

CHAPTER XIX.

THE AUDIENCE . . . . .	PAGE 191
------------------------	-------------

CHAPTER XX.

THE COLONEL'S PROGRAMME . . . . .	203
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BUFFALO HUNT . . . . .	213
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HEROES OF THE DAY . . . . .	220
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REHABILITATION OF THE TIGER . . . . .	230
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

MORE TIGER STORIES . . . . .	243
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CROQUET PARTY . . . . .	257
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRIUMPH OF BARBAROU . . . . .	273
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVII.

A ROYAL INTERVIEW . . . . .	285
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PICNIC . . . . .	296
----------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XXIX.

	PAGE
THE CHAMPION OF THE TIGERSLAYERS . . . .	303

## CHAPTER XXX.

THE VALLEY OF DEATH . . . . .	316
-------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TIGERSKIN . . . . .	329
-------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XXXII.

A CALCUTTA NEWSPAPER . . . . .	342
--------------------------------	-----

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
"The train only stops twenty minutes!" . . . . .	1
"I beg your pardon, sir!" . . . . .	5
"I have really and truly been eaten by a lion" . . . . .	12
"I knelt down and took a long, steady aim" . . . . .	19
"The lion was on the top of me" . . . . .	24
He was seemingly a straightforward man . . . . .	27
"Good!" said the doctor . . . . .	37
"It stung me in the thumb!" . . . . .	43
"A very restless night" . . . . .	47
The vessel drove forward in huge leaps . . . . .	55
"The first man that touches my bag, I will impale him" . . . . .	62
"Custom of the country!" said Everest calmly . . . . .	68
"I see in your face that you are disappointed!" . . . . .	77
"Ah! I've got him this time!" . . . . .	82
"I beg to offer you my services" . . . . .	87
"Victory, my friends! Fate has spoken!" . . . . .	100
Each on his lascar, the group marched off to the shore . . . . .	111
A buffalo lay dead on the ground . . . . .	119
The buffalo rushed at him . . . . .	124
As they ascended, the vegetation became more verdant . . . . .	132
"Are you sure that it was a panther?" . . . . .	135
The panther sprang on to the tree . . . . .	145
This time it would not do to fail . . . . .	148
These curious monuments . . . . .	158

	PAGE
In the open doorway appeared the head of a gigantic elephant . . . . .	165
And thus they made their entry . . . . .	167
The lady was only very slightly impressed . . . . .	179
Holbeck proposed the ladies . . . . .	188
The doctor was shot off . . . . .	191
"Great and venerated philosopher." . . . .	199
The club in session . . . . .	203
A large fire had been lighted . . . . .	213
Came furiously charging up to Everest . . . . .	220
"I threw up my arms, opened my legs, and jumped into the tree" . . . . .	226
"He heard the bell jingle on his chest" . . . . .	230
"Suddenly I saw Bahadour glide into the water, to cross to the other side" . . . . .	241
A garden party . . . . .	243
Wilmot had had the pluck and strength to draw his revolver	251
The Grand Cordon of the most illustrious Order . . . .	257
Very gracefully she held towards him one of the mallets .	264
The guests were received in the peristyle . . . . .	273
These excellent things were not very easy of access ! .	279
Goulab Sing appeared in person to receive his guests .	285
"The King-of-the-tigers himself !" . . . . .	293
But Everest had reached him . . . . .	296
Under the escort of sportsmen armed to the teeth . . .	303
"The hand of my daughter !" . . . . .	309
Down the ravine . . . . .	316
Crossing his arms, he waited for death . . . . .	327
On a litter borne by four shikaris . . . . .	329
"Here is the skin of the famous King-of-the-tigers which you killed" . . . . .	336
The church at Serampore . . . . .	342



"The train only stops twenty minutes!"

# THE KING OF THE TIGERS:

A STORY OF CENTRAL INDIA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE PASSENGER BY THE EXPRESS.

THE Paris express, puffing and panting as if out of breath, came slowing into the station at Marseilles. The porters lightly sprang upon the footboards, and, throwing open the carriage doors, gave forth in their professional singsong the chorus of,—

"Marseilles! Marseilles! Twenty minutes here! Passengers do not change for Toulon, Cannes, Nice, and the Italian frontier!"

In a few moments the train was discharging

its load on to the platform. The passengers who had come to their journey's end were hurriedly jumping out, reaching their hands to help their ladies through their ungraceful gymnastics, picking up the children in their outstretched arms, and seizing hold of the bags, hatboxes, rugs, umbrellas, and hundred and one paraphernalia carried by paterfamilias when on his travels. Those who were going farther by the train bounded out of its compartments as if distracted, and tumultuously crowded into the bar to avail themselves of the famous twenty minutes for refreshments, which the station clock was so rapidly devouring.

In the midst of the general hubbub, so much like the opening of a sheepfold, one of the compartments seemed to have been forgotten by the obsequious porters. Probably they had been stopped by the words "sleeping car" written along the door, knowing that on the road to Nice and Mentone the sleeping-carriages are frequently occupied by invalids who require unbroken repose.

Besides, there had been no movement in the car. The green-silk blinds had remained carefully drawn; the mysterious occupant or occupants did not care to be disturbed.

However, a servant, in black livery, stepped up to the compartment, and, quietly opening the door, put his head inside and in a low tone asked,—

"Does my lord require breakfast?"

"Where are we, John?" asked a voice from the depths of the semi-darkness in the carriage.

"At Marseilles, my lord," said the servant.

"Oh! already!" said the voice.

And then there was silence.

"The train only stops twenty minutes," said the servant timidly; "what shall I get for your lordship?"

"Nothing!" was the curt reply of the noble unknown.

"Does not your lordship wish for any breakfast?" continued the servant, without losing courage.

His urgency, however, seemed to quite wake up the occupant of the car. The voice this time answered with a slight appearance of irritation,—

"Leave me in peace, John; if I feel hungry I will go to the bar myself."

The servant stepped back, for the door, with a gentle push from the inside, opened wide, and his master appeared in the doorway.



The mysterious passenger was a young man; but nothing about him betrayed the consumptive invalid that we would have expected him to be from his peculiar style of travelling. Tall, broad-shouldered, well-knit, he wore one of those grey knickerbocker suits so dear to English tourists, and its peculiar cut showed off to perfection the nervous elegance of his figure. His clear, fresh face, almost ruddy in colour, told of health and strength. After a more attentive examination, however, this strapping, sturdy fellow did appear to be really ill, for his eyes had a look about them of grief and weariness, and gloomy melancholy.

Standing up in the doorway of the car, he



looked vacantly about him, utterly indifferent to the noisy tumult by which he was surrounded. At length he leisurely descended, and as he set foot on the platform he sighed deeply.

After a minute's hesitation he walked towards the refreshment-room, but on his road he caught sight of the way out. Again he seemed to hesitate, and finally he strolled towards the exit.

As he reached the gate a collector stopped him and asked for his ticket, and on its being shown informed him that the train would start in ten minutes. The young man, without heeding what was said, crossed the outer hall and found himself at the station steps.

The passengers arrived by the train were crowding into the omnibuses of the different hotels which were here in waiting for them. The porters were passing to the conductors the heavy trunks, which they noisily lumped on to the roof, as if with the intention of flattening in at one blow both the carriage and its occupants. Then each omnibus, having received its cargo, started off with a noisy cracking of whips and sparks of fire struck out by the horses' hoofs on the stones of the roadway.

The last vehicle was just moving off when a belated traveller, bag in hand, appeared on the steps. Seeing himself about to be left behind, he rushed down them so hurriedly as to almost upset the noble lord ; but, without showing any concern at the collision, with one stride of his long legs he caught the omnibus and jumped in.

The door shut, and as the vehicle again started the young passenger by the express beheld at the

window a bright-red beard and a bronzed face that seemed not unlike that of an Indian idol, and the bronzed face shouted to him, with an unmistakable southern accent,—

“I beg your pardon, sir!”

The stranger understood that the red man was apologizing for having cannoned against him a few minutes before, and this retrospective politeness somewhat astonished him. With strange curiosity he was anxious to see what hotel in Marseilles was to have the happiness of receiving the individual who was so impetuous and so polite, and, lifting his eyes to the board behind, he saw written thereon in golden letters, “Hôtel Boule d’Or. The largest in the port.”



Mechanically his look followed the vehicle, which at full speed dashed down the steep slope that leads from the station to the town. The space in front of the station was now empty. The fine grey dust so characteristic of the Provençal soil, stirred up for a moment by all this agitation, danced in the warm May-day sun and gently settled on the agaves and aloes that the railway company has placed round the square as an attraction to tourists who are athirst for tropical scenery. Beyond the stone balustrade which surrounds the station yard there appeared the tiled roofs and lofty trees in the avenues of the Phocæan city, whose busy hum mingled with the gentle murmur of the waves on the Mediterranean shore.

Silent and thoughtful, the young traveller

remained there watching with vacant look the unattractive panorama, which gave him no hint of the hidden beauties of the gulf of Marseilles. But that mattered little to him. With strange tenacity only one thing remained before his eyes, and this thing was no less than the figure of the "red man" whom he had seen but a moment before. He could not have explained why he was struck with this apparition, nor why the sight of the unknown should send a thousand mournful thoughts coursing through his wearied brain. But there he remained, with his eyes fixed on the point where the omnibus had disappeared, and, forgetful of train and time, he muttered,—

"Here or there, what does it matter? Death may soon come and close my eyes for ever on this dazzling light. This strange man may be the messenger of that mysterious fate which has brought me hither!"

And at the moment the servant ran up, looking quite alarmed, and said,—

"I did not see you go out, my lord, and I have been looking for you everywhere. The train is going to start, and the people are already in their seats. You must be quick."

"We will remain here," was the curt answer of the young Englishman.

"But, my lord," said the servant, bewildered—"the luggage!"

"You must manage to get it out. I tell you I am going to stay here."

At this peremptory order the man disappeared at a run into the station, while his master calmly resumed his examination of the dusty aloes, and

wondered if they were genuine plants from the hands of nature, or simply triumphs of zinc from the workshop of man.

An instant afterwards a prolonged whistle re-echoed through the station, and then came a dull, heavy rumble. The train was off again, to Nice. Before the sound had died away the servant re-appeared, followed by several men carrying the traveller's luggage.

"You see, my lord," said the servant, whose face was streaming with perspiration, "it was only just in time; and I had a good deal of difficulty in getting them to give me up the luggage. The train was on the move—"

"You have already told me, and that will do," interrupted his lordship.

"But all the omnibuses are now gone," continued the servant, "and I must send a man to look for a carriage."

"You need not do that," said the traveller; "I will walk to the hotel, and you can bring the luggage on with you."

"At what hotel does your lordship intend to stop?"

"At the Boule d'Or."

On hearing this one of the station porters whispered something in the servant's ear, and he immediately exclaimed,—

"That one is not to be thought of, my lord. The Boule d'Or is an hotel down at the harbour, and—"

"John, I am astonished at you! I said I was going to the Boule d'Or—that ought to be enough for you."

And to cut short all discussion on the subject, the young man drew out a superb umbrella from a case among the luggage, and, armed with that truly British weapon, strode off down the road to the town.

Keeping straight on, he soon reached the magnificent avenues of huge trees which run through the northern quarters and lead to the Canebière.

This magnificent thoroughfare—the pride of Marseilles, the glory of Provence—is a fine wide road, resembling the Paris boulevards in the splendour of the mansions which are built along it.

It runs right across the city down to the harbour; and that which gives the town the seal of originality of which the people are so justly proud, is the forests of masts and sails mingling with the handsome frontages of the hotels on the Canebière. It is, in fact, the chief artery of the Phocæan port—the general meeting-place of its merchants, sailors, and unemployed. At all hours of the day a picturesque crowd of Mediterranean seamen, Catalans, North Africans, Greeks, Smyrniotes, Turks, and Genoese, hurry along its pavement, or collect about the cafés on the Canebière.

Calm and impassible in the midst of this noisy throng, the Englishman pursued his way, halting from time to time to read with care the signs of the numerous hotels he was passing; but none bore the brilliant title he was in search of, and which he doubtless confused in his thoughts with the shining ball of the red-faced man.

His search brought him down to the old dock, which is always full of the varied specimens of

Mediterranean craft, packed like sardines in a barrel.

The traveller then remembered that the "Boule d'Or" was the "largest in the port," and, concluding that now he had reached the port he could hardly fail to discover the building that was its brightest ornament, he continued his search.

He wandered for some time among the cotton bales and coffee sacks that crowded the quay, hustled a little by the lumpers and porters, but he could see no trace of the fascinating sign.

At length, quite tired out, he ended where he had begun, and addressing a street boy who was loafing on the quay, asked him with much politeness to show him the way to the celebrated hotel.

The street boy, recognizing him as an English traveller by his appearance and accent, looked at him quizzingly for a moment, and then made up his mind to say,—

"Follow me, sir; it is close by."

Turning down the first street opening on to the quay, the boy in a few minutes brought him in front of the hotel which he had been seeking.

"There you are," said he, showing him a house of modest appearance, whose front was decorated with a hemisphere of copper which had once been gilded.

The Englishman attentively examined the hotel. In spite of its modest look it promised well.

Orange-trees in tubs stood at the sides of the gateway, and through it he noticed a small sanded courtyard surrounded by green benches, and adorned in the centre by a chubby-faced angel holding a fountain-jet in its hands.

Satisfied with his examination, the traveller handed some silver to his guide, and walked with great deliberation up to the entrance. The Englishman opened the glass door, and found himself before a stout, good-looking dame, wearing an Artesian bonnet, who, without moving from the arm-chair in which she was seated behind a small mahogany counter, asked,—

“What can I do for you, sir?”

“Madam, I should like a room in your hotel.”

This very natural demand seemed, however, to surprise the good lady.

“I hope you will excuse me, sir; we have few strangers here. I thought you had come for one of my captains.”

“I do not want a captain, madam,” said the Englishman, also somewhat surprised. “I want a room; and providing that it is clean and aired it matters little to me what floor it is on.”

“All my rooms are clean and aired, sir,” said the inn-keeper, bridling up. “One can see that you do not know the Boule d’Or.”

“True, madam, I have not yet had the honour,” said the young man, with a slight bow.

“In that case,” said the lady, thawing somewhat, “will No. 17 suit you?”

“Perfectly,” said the Englishman, taking the key which the lady held out to him. “Will you simply have the goodness to tell my servant the number? He will be here soon with my luggage.”

“Certainly,” said the inn-keeper, at the same time striking a small gong, which immediately brought a gigantic negro on the scene.



"Take this gentleman to No. 17," she said to him. And as the Englishman was preparing to follow the negro, she added, "I forgot, sir, to ask your name. The police regulations require me to enter it on my register; and besides, I cannot know your servant without it."

"Here it is, madam," said the Englishman, offering his card.

The good lady rapidly drew out her spectacles, and holding them on her nose, read, not without difficulty, these words engraved on the piece of pasteboard:—

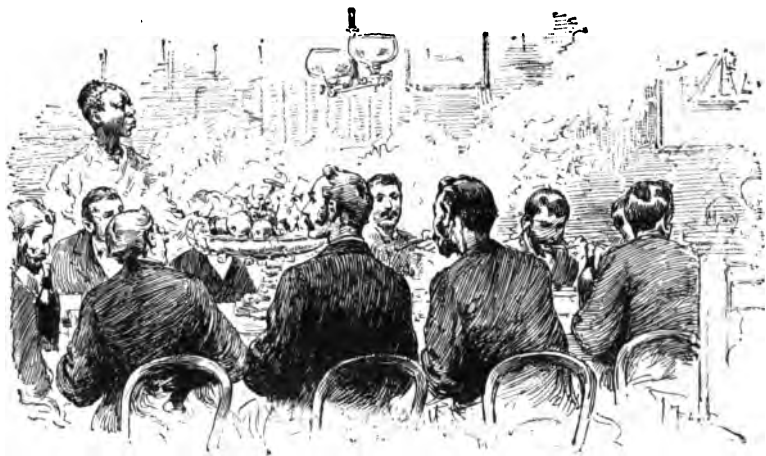
LORD EVEREST,

*Grosmore Castle, Yorkshire.*

"I do not wonder at his being such an original," she muttered, after she had finished reading. "A lord!"

Then, after pondering for an instant, and scrutinizing the card with as much respect as if it were some magic amulet, she added, "A lord! A real live lord at the Boule d'Or!"





“I have really and truly been eaten by a lion.”

## CHAPTER II.

LORD EVEREST.

THE dining-room was the best part of the Boule d'Or, and occupied nearly all the ground-floor. Narrow and rather long, it was a little gloomy during the day, for the only light it received came from two high windows side by side at one of its ends. These two windows, however, opened on to the harbour, and from them could always be obtained a varied and animated view of the old dock, with its Greek caiques, Catalan tartanes, and Atlantic cutters.

A few arm-chairs, a table covered with newspapers, and a small desk with writing materials filled up the space between the windows, and made of it a sort of drawing-room, highly appreciated by the frequenters of the hotel, who there made

themselves comfortable after dinner, and smoked their cigarettes.

The long, wide table, losing itself in the semi-darkness, occupied the rest of the room, and, with the double row of chairs, almost filled it.

The night had come. Four chandeliers now threw a flood of light over the sumptuosities of which good Madame Ducoux, the proprietress of the Boule d'Or, was so proud, and which she regretted so much could not be seen during the day. The walls were now visible, with their splendid watered paper, half covered with coloured lithographs of shipping, carefully-framed show-cards of steam-vessels, and innumerable nicknacks, Indian tomahawks, stuffed birds, and other sundries given by generous visitors. The table was resplendent in all its glory of well-laid cloth, baskets of fruit, biscuits and macaroons, and porcelain vases full of artificial flowers, somewhat faded with dust and fly-blows.

A clock struck—its sharp sound resembling the bells on board ship—and suddenly the room was filled with a noisy throng of men, little and big, fat and thin, brown and red, but nearly all wearing the uniform so dear to ocean-going captains.

Very soon all were seated, not without several interchanges of cheerful greetings. Then the giant negro appeared, carrying a vast soup-tureen, with which he made the tour of the room, filling the plate of each guest with a portion of succulent clam soup.

Conversation had dropped, and nothing was heard but a formidable murmur of absorption, not

unlike that produced by a rainstorm in a road-gutter.

At this moment the new arrival at the Boule d'Or entered the room, and, guided by the negro, walked up to an empty chair which had been placed for him near the upper end of the table.

Once he was seated the noble lord threw a rapid glance at the healthy bronzed figures which surrounded the table, and then he more attentively examined his neighbours.

On his right a bulky captain with a neck worthy of a lobster was making terrible plunges into his plate and swallowing his soup with a sonorous snuffle, while on his left a little man was, in a critical fashion, just taking a taste. Clean shaved, with a pointed nose armed with golden spectacles, the little man in a white cravat seemed like a lawyer who had lost his way into this society of sea-wolves. However, the Englishman noticed after a little attention that the colour of the "lawyer" was as healthy as that of his companions, and so he concluded that he had discovered a new species of mariner, one with a white choker and gold spectacles.

The discovery did not seem to interest him very much, and he was just going to begin on his soup, when, to his satisfaction, he saw emerge in front of him from the depths of a soup-plate the shining, jolly-looking face of the "red man." The "red man" had only come to a halt. Hardly had he raised his head before the negro filled his plate again, and with renewed ardour he proceeded to absorb his second portion.

Lord Everest was rather ruffled at not being

recognized by the red-faced man, but cutting short his examination, he in his turn attacked the famous Provençal soup and rapidly despatched it.

This care accomplished, he gave a long sigh, saying to himself that all the surroundings were very vulgar and commonplace, and that there was little chance in this honest hotel of his meeting with the terrible issue of his existence.

This thought immediately started him on a train of gloomy thought, and he mechanically parroted of what he was helped to without paying any attention to what was passing around him.

Lord Everest was in fact one of the most unhappy young men on the face of this earth, for he had persuaded himself that he was afflicted with that common English malady, the spleen; a malady which nothing can cure—for it is caused by disgust and contempt for everything.

And all his friends smiled when he spoke to them of his miserable existence. They all agreed that it was very sad to be left an orphan when very young, but they suggested that in Everest's case the regret at having lost the parents he had never known might be somewhat tempered by the ample fortune these same parents had left behind them. The poor lad had on one occasion been of this opinion, but he had soon altered his mind.

When on the day he reached his majority his lawyer-guardian had handed him over all that made him one of the richest noblemen in the United Kingdom, it seemed to Everest that life had begun to smile. He had run through Europe, scattering gold on his way, gratifying the most

eccentric fancies, and collecting round him a crowd of assiduous parasites. Once his first enthusiasm was over, weary with pleasures so easily attainable, he had sought round him for a friend—and discovered that he had not one. Those he had formerly had had fled, fearing to be sprinkled with the spray from the waves of his bounty; and had abandoned him to the greedy sponges who formed his body-guard.

Everest in a very short time dispersed this noisy following and returned to England. 64

He then thought of founding that family life which fate had denied him. Warmly welcomed in the world which opened to him for his title and his wealth, he permitted it to be seen that, notwithstanding his youth, he was willing to marry. Immediately he became the prey of greedy dowagers, who fastened on to him, hinting every day of some new alliance richer and more brilliant than the last. Here, also, the lad was soon disillusionized; it did not take him long to see that he was made much of not for his looks or his sense, but for his enormous fortune. The idea of marriage under such circumstances filled him with disgust, and he gave it up.

Wearied with his wealth, he resolved to part with it—to annihilate it; and, in order to put it to worthy uses, to spend it in founding hospitals. But here again he was stopped. He had but a life interest in his property; the law allowed him, if he liked, to throw his revenue into the Thames, but it stopped him from in any way touching his capital. He was condemned to carry his thousands along with him through life.

He then persuaded himself that in death was his only hope of safety ; but, too thoughtful of his self-respect to kill himself with his own hands, he sought his fate in some casual adventure. In vain for four years he had risked his life in a thousand ways—climbing the most difficult peaks of the Alps, accompanying aeronauts to the clouds in many a balloon, travelling constantly on the railways which had the most frequent accidents. An implacable destiny watched over him and brought him unscathed through every obstacle, dragging him safe and sound from beneath carriages that had been smashed into fragments, and shielding him from hurt while others fell. It certainly seemed that in his cradle some fairy had made him invulnerable.

Everest, however, was obstinate ; he would not give up his idea, and so he journeyed about the world, letting chance direct his footsteps in the hope that eventually he would meet the end he wished.

Suddenly the young man was awakened from his gloomy thoughts by the noisy shouts around him, and he was for the moment surprised to find himself at the *Boule d'Or*. The dinner was nearly done, the waiters were clearing away the cloth and placing the coffee and liqueurs on the table.

Conversation, which had languished at the commencement of the meal, had now become general, and the sounds of merriment filled the room with a deafening din. All the faces were now red—not only from the warm tint given to the seafaring features by the ocean breezes, but also from the more transient brilliancy due to a liberal dinner.

In a second or so Lord Everest gathered that hunting and fishing adventures were under discussion. Each guest was endeavouring to obtain silence in order that he might tell some of his wonderful exploits to his neighbours; but the recitals grew noisier and noisier, so that the traveller was unable to discover the particular subject that his companions were talking about. To make a story intelligible in such a company would have required a speaking-trumpet.

Deafened by the noise, Everest pushed back his chair, and was about to leave the table, when he saw the personage by whom he had been attracted to the Boule d'Or—the “red man” himself, more ruddy than ever—rise from his seat, and, with his tall figure towering above all, shout out in the voice of a stentor, “Well, sirs, such as you see me here, I, Barbarou, have really and truly been eaten by a lion!”

A peal of ironical applause greeted this unexpected declaration.







"I knelt down and took a long, steady aim."

### CHAPTER III.

#### EATEN BY A LION.

UNABASHED by the evident incredulity of his audience, the red man continued,—

"Yes, gentlemen, I repeat, I, Jean Barbarou, here present, have been devoured by a lion, and if that seems too astonishing for you, my friend Dr. Holbeck, who is seated opposite, can assure you that I am only telling the truth—the—simple—truth."

At these words the looks of all present were turned towards Lord Everest's neighbour, the man with the gold spectacles, who contented himself with giving a modest smile, from which it was impossible to say if he confirmed the assertion of the red-faced man, or declined the honour of having been one of the heroes of so extraordinary an adventure.

The room, a few moments before so full of

noise, was now silent. With unconcealed curiosity all were waiting for the marvellous story which was to have such an ending.

Barbarou, satisfied at the result, sat down, and without further ado began :—

“It is ten years ago. It was about 1872 or 1873, the date does not matter. I had finished my time on board the *Juno*, and thanks to the permission of the captain, I was about to begin travelling for the Mennevals. Of course you know the house. It is the largest in Paris for feathers and plumes, in the Rue St. Denis ; the sign is the Casoar. They send travellers out all over the world to collect the feathers of ostriches, marabouts, and rare birds generally. As a start they sent me out with Holbeck to the coast of Africa. We had to collect as many as we could of a sort of ouzel with a golden breast, a bird with beautiful plumage that our employers wished to bring out as a hat ornament.

“Holbeck had already done a good deal of travelling in Africa and in both Americas. He was an old stager, while I was but an apprentice, and that is why they sent me with him. I ought to add that since then we have never parted company. Holbeck and I, you see, are like coat and lining.

“But I must keep to my story.

“We both left Bordeaux on a boat for the Gaboon. Once there we invited King Denis, the bravest negro on the coast, and he said to us, ‘My friends, if you want golden ouzels you will have to take a run for them ; there are no more round here ; you will have to go into the interior,

and follow up the river as far as you can,' 'Thank you for your information,' we replied. And off we started up the great River Gaboon.

"As we went along we had to stop at the villages and hold long palavers, lasting for many hours perhaps, all for a few dozen ouzel-skins.

"At length, in order to collect all we wanted, we made up our minds to leave the river and try more in the depths of the country.

"Speaking of the country, it is not the place in which I should choose to live on my savings—if I ever have any—I assure you. It is a filthy, pestilent morass haunted by crocodiles, and beyond this is a forest so thick that you can hardly get through it. But in its woods are the loveliest birds in the world. On the other hand, the niggers are most awfully ugly, and black, and woolly, and wear their teeth pointed like wolves.



They are not bad fellows, however, and they gave us a pretty fair welcome, and asked us into their huts, but we did not care much about accepting their hospitality for the night, for the huts had no doors, and the gorillas could walk in and walk off with us. Gorillas, you know, are big apes as large as men, but about ten times as strong. These terrible beasts have no scruples about fighting the negroes, and some-



times, they say, will carry away the children and bring them up with them in the woods ; but I am not sure about that, it may only be a nigger's yarn."

"How about your lion, Barbarou?" interrupted one of the audience, impatient at the long digression.

"Patience, my good fellow," said the red-faced man. "We shall get to him in time. Don't you want to know the country first where the adventure occurred?"

"I will continue. It was on the Gaboon coast, and a more wretched country I do not know. The inhabitants are so idle that they have no tillage, no provisions of any sort, and when you want a meal you have to go out and find it for yourself. For me this, as you can imagine, was rather a rough beginning. What with hunting for our food and collecting our birds, we were always in the thick of the forest among the many perils that threatened us.

"One day when we had run rather short, a nigger came in and told us that not far from the camp he had seen a number of those large antelopes with the curved horns that are called dougals. Holbeck and I started in pursuit ; but the savage had deceived us, at least as far as the distance was concerned, for we had been gone about two hours, rushing about among the rocks and traversing the marsh through the bushes and reeds, before we caught sight of the flock, which, all told, numbered just three. They were in the middle of an open space about a hundred yards off, and as they seemed restless we could not hope to get nearer to them.

“Holbeck, with his spectacles, then as now, would have been incapable of putting a bullet into a target at fifty yards. So it fell to me to try my luck. I knelt down and took a long, steady aim.

“The gun went off, and to our great joy one of the antelopes made a big jump and fell heavily on to the ground, while the others scuttled away. My gun had but one barrel, so I could not try a second shot.

“It did not matter. We were quite satisfied. The antelope I had killed was as big as a calf, and quite enough to refill our larder. We set to work then to bristle it, and as we could not think of carrying it away whole we cut it into three pieces, and we each took one, which we strapped on to our backs, and we gave the third to the nigger who had come with us.

“Loaded in this way, as the day was getting on, we returned in all haste to our camp. We had already gone more than half the distance, when, as we were passing through a bit of jungle, we suddenly heard a formidable roar close by us.”

“The lion at last!” shouted the whole audience, with one voice.

“Yes, it was the lion,” continued the imperturbable Barbarou, “and I would much rather you had been there than I. When I first saw him he was about ten paces in front of me, right in the middle of the path, and I can assure you I did not feel much inclined to laugh, for I remembered that I had been fool enough to forget to reload my gun. But I had not much time to think.

Holbeck, who was behind, fired at the lion, and in a single bound the beast was on me, and with a terrific roar threw me to the ground.

"As I fell I had just time to see Holbeck and the negro run off as fast as their legs could carry them, and then I lost consciousness.

"My brave companion thought I was really and truly dead, and that he could do nothing to save me.

"How long I remained senseless I do not know, but I came back to life very gradually. At first I had a confused notion of what had happened to me, and I tried to rise, and the movement I made was answered with a hoarse growl, and I felt myself pressed to the ground by some enormous weight. The lion was on the top of me.

"This discovery set all my limbs on the tremble, but that was nothing to what I experienced when I found that the savage creature was going to eat me up alive. I heard my bones crack in his formidable jaws, and felt my blood streaming round my neck and down my cheeks.

"However, strange as it may seem, I was in no pain ; all I experienced was a horrible feeling of oppression. I then remembered to have heard people say that men and animals seized by wild beasts were thrown into a peculiar torpor, which takes away all feeling of suffering.

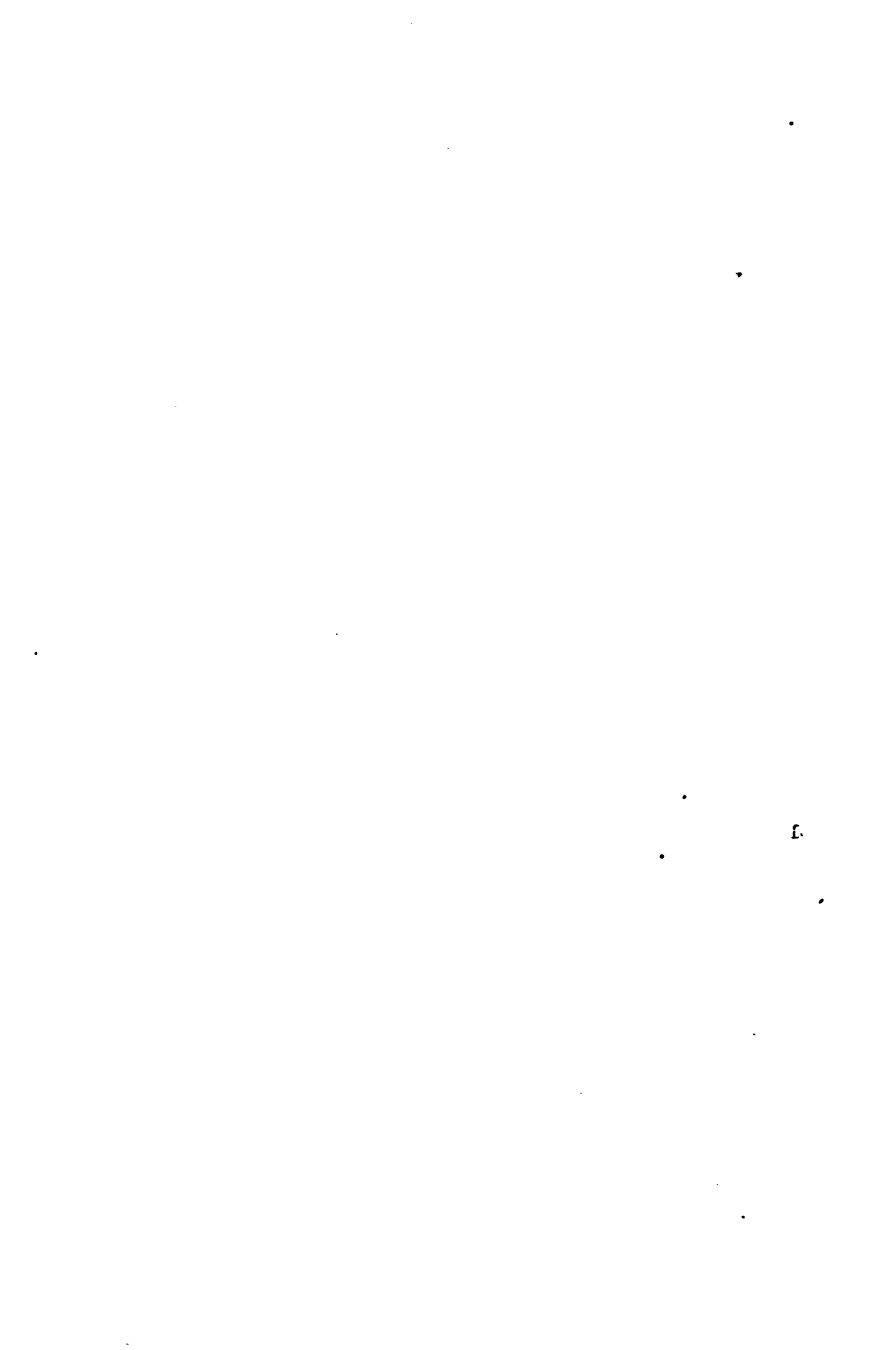
"If I did not feel the horrible tearings of my flesh by the lion's teeth, my brain, on the other hand, was seized by such indescribable terror that again I felt my senses going, and I fainted.

"When I came to myself it was night, and a ring of negroes, armed with torches, surrounded



"The lion was on the top of me."

Pag





me. As I opened my eyes their grimacing figures, lit up by the flames, made me believe that I was already in the regions below—or at least half way there, for I don't remember to have done anybody a particularly bad action. But soon I noticed the welcome face of Holbeck, who was leaning over me and crying, as he said, 'My poor Barbarou !' Then I tried to rise, and what was my astonishment at finding that I could easily do so ! Once on my feet, I touched my arms, my legs, my head, my chest. All were unharmed ; I had only a few scratches—not even a wound ! ”

This revelation was received by a murmur of incredulity on the part of his hearers, and one of the captains, giving utterance to the prevailing sentiment, exclaimed, “ What a yarn, Barbarou ! You were dreaming, and the lion had left you after you got out of his way.”

“ That is where you make the mistake,” continued the red-faced man. “ Everything occurred as I have just had the honour to tell you, up to the time when Holbeck, returning from the camp in all haste to look for my corpse, had reached the place where I fell, and found the lion busily engaged in devouring me. The brute only left me when he saw the approach of the men with the torches.”

“ Well, what then ? ” asked the company, evidently puzzled by this new affirmation.

“ Well, it is a very simple matter,” said Barbarou, with great modesty. “ I fell with my face to the ground, and the lion, thinking he was eating me, had been regaling himself on the excellent quarter of antelope that I had strapped on to my back ! ”

Thunders of applause greeted this unexpected conclusion, and the whole company, with glass in hand, saluted the red-faced man with a long "Bravo, Barbarou! Long life to you!"

And Barbarou contented himself with a triumphant smile, and "I told you so!"





He was seemingly a straightforward man.

## CHAPTER IV.

DR. HOLBECK.

AND now the visitors at the Boule d'Or noisily rose from the table, and by their laughing comments continued the ovation they had given the gallant Barbarou. Then the room gradually emptied, some leaving the hotel in groups and straggling off down the silent street, others strolling into a neighbouring room, whence in a few minutes the sounds denoted that a formidable game at pool was in progress.

Everest remained alone, seated in his chair. The wild story of the sailor-traveller had led his imagination into a new reverie.

Why had he not thought of this sooner? Instead of painfully seeking an obscure and use-

less death in this old Europe, where everything is duly disciplined—even chance itself—why had he not sought those privileged regions where man has to defend his life at every moment of the day or night? In these delightful countries death smiles on you from all sides, and the height of happiness can be sought amongst an embarrassing choice of choleras, fevers, tropical maladies, and dramatic attentions from tigers and a hundred other species of carnivora. There was no waiting there for those commonplace smashes between the cushioned compartments of a railway carriage or ridiculous upsets over precipice rails which furnish such appropriate entries for the “miscellaneous columns” so dear to hall-porters. There for suitable scenery the man can choose the sublime depths of the jungle, and prolong the terrors of death by a hand-to-hand struggle with one of the kings of savage nature.

Yes, most decidedly he ought to go there, and he would go there.

Perhaps he would have continued for some time lost in this lugubrious reverie, which had such charms for him, if the waiters who were clearing the table had not recalled him to reality.

Seeing that he was in the way, Lord Everest arose and went towards the door to go out, but as he crossed the threshold he stopped. He had just noticed at the end of the room, between the two windows, the travelling companion of the illustrious Barbarou.

Comfortably seated in an arm-chair, Dr. Holbeck was enjoying a long clay pipe and reading the Marseilles *Semaphore*.

On perceiving the "man with the gold spectacles" Everest remembered the peculiar smile with which he had greeted the story of the lion. Instantly it flashed across him that the captains, noticing he was a new arrival, had, with Barbarou's connivance, been amusing themselves at his expense. Had he not read in particularly serious books that for many years civilization had completely covered the globe, and that now, with our telegraphs and iron roads penetrating the most distant regions, we must reject as merely the legends of antiquity all those stories of dramatic adventures with which travellers gulled a too credulous public? He remembered reading in the train, the evening before, an article in one of the Paris journals, in which it said that, after lengthened research, it had been discovered that the last cannibal was a native of Batignolles, and that the so-called skins of that fabulous animal the tiger were merely bullocks' hides cleverly striped and brilliantly dyed.

Evidently Barbarou, in piling up the horrors in his description, had been trying to mystify the new arrival. Everest, however, resolved to settle the matter one way or another, for the man before him had been the only one who, by his reserved demeanour, had refused to assist at this undignified comedy. He was seemingly a straightforward man, and, if adroitly questioned, would probably tell the truth.

Everest then walked to the end of the room, and, selecting an arm-chair close to that occupied by the doctor, seated himself therein.

The man with the gold spectacles and white

cravat perceived the Englishman, and, putting down his newspaper, made a slight bow, which the young man immediately returned.

The ice was broken. Everest was thinking of some commonplace observation to begin with, when the doctor put an end to his embarrassment by saying, "You have only recently arrived in Marseilles, sir?"

"This very day," was Everest's reply.

"It is the first time you have been in this part of the country?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case I am sure that you will be very pleased with your visit. Marseilles is one of the most interesting towns in France. With its clear sky, its girdle of mountains, its fine promenades, its beautiful blue bay, dotted with picturesque rocks and islets, it is, from my humble point of view, the rival of Naples; but with its immense shipping trade, the feverish activity of its inhabitants, and its continual development, it leaves the idle city of the *lazzaroni* far behind."

"Unfortunately, I take very little interest in the beauties of nature," answered Lord Everest. "That is not the motive that brought me to Marseilles."

"You came on business, then?" said the amiable doctor. "I ought to have seen that. This modest hotel is not a tourist's rendezvous, and your countrymen have much to do with our Phocæan merchants. For," added he, with a slight smile, "I see that you are an Englishman."

"That is true, sir," said the young man; "and that reminds me that I have been guilty of an

oversight which I hope you will pardon. The accidents of conversation informed me just now that it is Dr. Holbeck to whom I have the honour of speaking. Allow me to fill the place of introducer, and to introduce myself." And rising with great gravity, he bowed low, and continued—"Lord Everest."

The doctor was somewhat astonished, and also stood up, and, confused more by his lordship's politeness than by his title, held out his hand to the stranger, and, with great friendliness, remarked,—

"Delighted to meet you, sir. But pray sit down."

Everest accepted the invitation, and when the doctor had also resumed his arm-chair, recommenced the conversation with,—

"I came to Marseilles only by chance."

"Really!" said the man with the white cravat, evidently astonished that any one could be influenced by such an unreasonable thing as chance.

"When I say chance," added the Englishman, "I make a slight mistake, for I owe my being here at this moment principally to your friend Mr. Barbarou."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the doctor, more and more astonished. "Then you know Barbarou?"

"Not the least in the world. I saw him for the first time this morning as he was coming out of the railway station."

"But then?"

"Well, it is very difficult to explain why I acted as I did," continued Everest. "At the

moment I was in a state of uncertainty. I was struck with the look of your friend, and this slight incident decided me to break my journey and stop at Marseilles. I saw the name of the hotel on the omnibus that Mr. Barbarou got into. I knew of no other, and so I came here."

This time the doctor gave the young man a keen look, as if to see if he was talking to a lunatic, but Everest's frank and pleasant face reassured him, and he concluded that perhaps the proceedings were not quite so curious as they at first seemed.

"You will admit," continued the Englishman, "that I have no cause to regret my decision, as it has allowed me to become better acquainted with such an extraordinary man as Mr. Barbarou. How calmly and coolly he has just been telling us of that wonderful adventure. It seems to me that very few men would remain sane after such an experience."

"There is no need to exaggerate things," said Holbeck. "My friend is a most excellent fellow, but he is not much above or below the average of our profession."

"Then his adventure is not true?" interrupted the Englishman.

"Barbarou told you himself that I witnessed it," replied the doctor, "and I am not the man to allow him to call me in to support a falsehood."

"Believe me, I do not doubt that for a minute," said Everest.

"Besides, I repeat," continued Holbeck, "I think my friend is a thoroughly honest fellow;



and in my opinion a man who tells lies is not an honest fellow, for even for no motive at all he will try to mislead people. But all the same, my friend is a southerner, and, above all, a Marseillais. Nature has endowed the inhabitants of this sunny land with a most marvellous gift; while we of the north have to keep our eyes on the cold grey mist which surrounds us from our childhood, they on the contrary, with eyes steeped in light, can gaze around them, and see every object framed in a shining aureola; they see everything at its best. Their keen and graceful intelligence delights in decorating truth with brilliant draperies, and this disguise is to them so indispensable that they seem to be shocked when the goddess is shown in her primitive nudity. And they know their failing, and rally each other about it without malice; witness the legend of the Port Bou fisherman, which you doubtless know."

"I have not the pleasure of doing so," said Everest.

"Well, this fisherman was on the jetty at Port Bou and saw a tiny tunny fish drawn up out of the water, and as he was but little interested in the fact he walked on. A few moments afterwards he met a friend, to whom he remarked that he had just seen a man catch a magnificent tunny fish; to another friend farther on he described the fish as enormous, and gradually he increased it until it became a little whale. This notion rather pleased him, and as he entered his native village he announced that a little whale had been caught just outside the port, and as he walked on the whale became of moderate size, and at last

immense. At this news the inhabitants rushed from their houses, armed with pots and pails of all descriptions, to avail themselves of the unexpected piece of luck; and the fisherman, astounded at the excitement he had caused, and seeing everybody on the run, himself caught up a bucket and joined the rush to the harbour, saying as he did so, 'Perhaps it was a whale after all!'

"Yes, very amusing," interrupted the Englishman; "but it seems to me—"

"You are right," continued the doctor, without waiting for the stranger to finish. "Truth, thus covered with so many fringes, ends by resembling falsehood, but the foundation remains none the less true, and you see how, in all good faith, the deceiver is lost in his own deception."

"It is the same with my friend Barbarou's yarn; the foundation is true and sufficiently curious by itself. From the embroidery that is hung on to it we must, however, cut off a fringe or two. It is true that the lion caught him as he said, and when I returned, thinking to bring away only a mutilated corpse, I was agreeably surprised to find my friend still alive. He had been badly mauled about, and did not entirely recover his consciousness for several days afterwards, when the fever which had come on had abated. It was I that suggested the scenery of the drama of which he was the unconscious victim, and explained to him the really providential part which had been played by the quarter of antelope strapped on his shoulders, and eaten by the lion instead of him. I also suggested the dramatic

awakening beneath the lion's paws. But to-day he is firmly persuaded that everything happened just as he said."

"The adventure remains none the less extraordinary," said Lord Everest, "and I admire the courage and energy of men who are capable of choosing so dangerous a profession."

"Every medal has its reverse," answered Holbeck philosophically. "Thank goodness we are not attacked by lions every day."

"But the countries you visit are still full of wild beasts?"

"Unfortunately, yes," replied the doctor. "The most beautiful birds have the most objectionable neighbours, and it would seem that nature has placed them there to attract men to regions which they otherwise would shun. But you see, all the same, that after fifteen years of journeyings through jungles, savannahs, forests, and pampas, I have not lost a limb."

"Probably it is your liking for the chase which made you adopt such a stirring profession?"

"Far from that, dear sir," exclaimed the doctor, with an indignation that was quite comic. "*I like the chase!* I have the greatest horror of the sound of a gun, and I never fire one without shutting both eyes. In fact, to avoid such a disagreeable disturbance, I have contrived a special crossbow, with which I can myself shoot the rarer birds."

"In that case, sir," said Everest, "am I indiscreet in asking—"

"How and why I became a traveller and a bird

hunter?" interrupted the doctor. "I will tell you my story, as you seem to feel an interest in it; but first allow me to order up the indispensable accessories."

And as he spoke he lightly struck the bell which was close to his hand.

The black domestic of the Boule d'Or immediately appeared, and to him said Holbeck,—

"Bring the Schiedam and two glasses!"





"Good!" said the doctor.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE AUTHORITY ON ANTS.

THE negro soon returned and placed a tray on the table. On it were two glasses, a bottle of Schiedam, a jug of hot water, a sugar-basin, and a lemon.

"Good," said the doctor. And he proceeded very methodically to compound what he called the preliminaries of his discourse. He first put into each glass a large lump of sugar, which gently melted as he poured on to it the hot water, then having cut the lemon in half he carefully squeezed the juice into the sugared liquid, and then he poured in the Geneva, keeping careful note of the proportion with a spoon.

When the glasses were filled he contemplated them for an instant with an air of satisfaction, and then said to Everest,—

"I think, sir, you will appreciate this mixture; it is of my own invention, and it took me a long

time to get the exact proportions. There is a good deal of care required in mixing a thing of this sort ; an inexperienced hand would produce an excess of sugar or alcohol, and the drink would be either sickening or injurious. Such as it is, my grog offers all the advantages of an alcoholic mixture relieved by the least quantity of citric acid, and possesses both strengthening and tonic qualities. Taken slowly in little sips, it facilitates digestion and assists repose during the night."

He handed one of the glasses to Everest, who dipped his lips into it, and murmured, "Excellent!"

The doctor, according to his own prescription, took a sip, and then, placing the glass on the table, he began :—



"And now, sir, for my story. As you will see, it is a very simple one, and quite devoid of dramatic incident. My father carried on in the north of France, at Hazebrouck, where I was born, the humble profession of a bird-stuffer. He had a good reputation for the ability with which he gave the appearance of life to the canaries, parrots, pug dogs, tom cats, and other sincerely regretted pets of the old ladies in the town and district. His business prospered, and as he had succeeded my grandfather, so he hoped one day that I should succeed him. He sent me to college, and made me devote particular attention to zoology and botany. Unfortunately, in spite of all my endeavours, these natural sciences inspired me with a very moderate love for them. I learned the principles,

in fact I became what you might call a fair naturalist ; but in spite of all I felt that my true vocation, my one passion, was for entomology.

“ When I left college, after finishing my humanities, I obtained my father’s permission to pursue my studies at Lille, where, while I continued my natural history work, I passed as a doctor of medicine. I had, however, no intention of practising, for my father seemed to think that that would be a step downwards, and to satisfy him I entered his workshop. But to his sorrow he saw that, though I was a capital assistant, I did not think much of my trade. Every moment I could get free I was off to the woods, seeking for insects, lifting up the stones and examining the trees. I was passionately fond of the order Hymenoptera, which you doubtless know as being one of the noblest and most magnificent of the Insecta.”

Everest made a slight movement of surprise, but the movement, slight as it was, did not escape the doctor, who, carried away by his enthusiasm, continued with,—

“ Can you be ignorant, sir, that the order of Hymenoptera is divided into two sections? The first, that of the Terebrants, is of little importance, it is true, although it is composed of the two families of the Entomophaga and the Phytiphaga, each counting two or three tribes ; but the second is the Aculeates, comprising four families, which cover the world with their representatives. Of these four families, two—the Fossores, with the wood wasps, and the Diplopteres, with the common wasps—are respectable, it must be admitted ;

but what do you say to the two others, the Heterogynes and the Melliferes, who are represented by the ant and the bee? Assuredly an order which comprises two such marvellous insects well deserves to be called glorious."

"Assuredly," said Everest, somewhat bewildered by the nomenclature.

"One of the great sorrows of the entomologist," continued the imperturbable doctor, "is that the portion of the animal kingdom to which he devotes himself is so vast that no human brain can grasp all its details. Soon I found that the order of Hymenoptera itself was too extensive for my feeble efforts. Gradually I had to limit myself; I abandoned the Terebrants. Then came a day when the Aculeates frightened me, and I was reduced to fix my choice on a single family—I mean, to take up my quarters with a single tribe. For me this was a moment replete with anguish. I should have liked to take up the Apidæ; but important work had been done with them, as from of old the learned have pursued the bees. At length I made my decision, and I selected the incomparable tribe of the Formicaries.

"How glad I am that I made the choice! I began my studies with the humblest member of the tribe, the fringed ant (*Formica emarginata*), which builds its dwellings in the neighbourhood of man, in the cracks in the walls, and at the foot of the trees in the gardens. But scarcely had I begun to work at the humble creature with the microscope than I was overwhelmed with admiration. I soon learnt that the ganglion hidden in the folds of the thorax places the ant immediately after man in the



scale of being, for this centre of all instinct, of all intelligence, is, in proportion, twice as large as the brain of the largest animals. If the elephant had a brain as much developed as that of the ant in proportion to his bulk, his enormous head would not be able to hold its fiftieth part.

"It was then I comprehended the secret of the magnificent social organization of the ant, with its labour and foresight, its perfect equality and order which nothing can trouble. In this little insect I admired the strength with which he moves such relatively enormous weights, the speed of his movements superior to that of all other creeping animals, the ingenuity of his buildings, with their granaries, nurseries, and meeting-halls.

"At length I made a summary of my observations and researches, and to the Academy of Sciences at Lille I presented a memoir on *Formica emarginata*, which brought me an honourable mention.

"Kept at Hazebrouck by my father's business, in which I continued to work at my trade of taxidermist, I had to be content with studying, one after another, only the local species. And so in turn I passed in review the black ant (the *nigra*, which peoples our fields), the yellow ant (the *rufa*, whose vast constructions are scattered amongst our woods), the clouded ant (*fuliginosa*, which builds the separate cells separated by the light partitions), the little ant (the *cunicularia*), &c., &c.

"But I soon ran out of specimens. I had ex-



hausted the sub-genus *Formica*. I then passed to other members of the tribe, but I found such a few representatives of them in our district that I had to content myself with preliminary studies only. It was in this way that I worked up all the peculiarities of the genus *Atta*, a kind of gigantic ant, which, as its name shows—it comes from the Greek *attos*—jumps and leaps on its prey, and even attacks mice and shrews; that of the *Polyergues*—from the Greek *poluergos*—that is to say, ‘toilers,’ with their powerful mandibles furnished with regular teeth; that of the *Poneres*, or wicked ants, of the *Cryptoceres*, and the *Myrmices*. I knew that each of these tribes had its varieties in infinite number scattered over the globe, but of all these numerous varieties I could not find a specimen to study properly. I was eager to do what none of my forefathers had done—to go out in the world and become personally acquainted with all these interesting things.

“About this time my father died; my poor mother had preceded him by some years. There was nothing now to keep me at Hazebrouck. I resolved to sell my father’s business. Unfortunately I was in too much of a hurry, and the sale brought me very little.

“But I went to Paris. Before starting on my wanderings I was anxious to consult the collections and the library at the Museum. I then discovered so many marvels that I forgot my projects. Months passed, and one fine day I found myself on the Paris pavement—with nothing.

“Entomology is unfortunately not a science on which its disciples can easily live. As for medicine,





"It stung me in the thumb!"

I wanted a practice, but I had none. You can hardly grow a round of patients in a few hours.

"I had to resume my old trade, and very much to my disgust I returned to the bird-stuffing. I had been for some time with the Mennevals, when, appreciating my abilities and special knowledge, they offered me the place of one of their travellers who had come to a tragic end in Guinea. I accepted it with great joy. This unexpected proposal realized the dream of my life.

"I first visited Africa, and as I collected my birds I made several lucky finds. Then I went to America, where I was immensely fortunate. There I had the pleasure of discovering the only really dangerous ant which exists on the globe. Not knowing the species, which is about as large as a wasp, I picked it up, and it stung me in the thumb. This sting, besides a sharp momentary pain, gave me fever and shivering fits, which lasted for twenty-four hours, notwithstanding the frequent application of ammonia to the wound. The natives told me that many similar stings had resulted in death.

"On my return I sent a memoir to the Academy of Sciences on *Cryptocerus atratus*. Thenceforward I was a celebrated man.

"Since then I have not ceased to accumulate materials for the scientific monument that I dream of raising to the noble tribe of Formicaries. The savings I have been able to make out of my income, which is not a small one, as I have a share in the profits of my expeditions, will shortly enable me to retire and devote myself to the work which will be the crowning point of my career."

The doctor stopped. The rapidity of his elocution, the enthusiasm awakened by his brilliant remembrances, lit up his eyes with fire till they sparkled again through the golden circles of his spectacles.

Everest now looked at him with respect, not that he understood very much of the rapid summary of the scientist, but because he admired this man who, poor in purse and weak in body, had simply, without boast or brag, sacrificed everything—his fortune, his comfort, and his life—for a scientific idea. For the first time for a good many years the young lord felt the awakening of an interest within him to which he was a stranger. He was on the point there and then of offering to assist the unknown with his wealth. But he understood that his offer would be declined, and perhaps cause the doctor to feel hurt. And so he said, in a kindly voice,—

“And to what country are you now thinking of going?”

“In a week,” answered Dr. Holbeck, “Barbarou and I start for the west coast of India. I expect to find many strange things for my employers as well as for myself. They tell me that the jungles abound with birds and ants. I shall there study the interesting varieties of the termites, for I confess that I have allowed these curious insects to remain outside the circle of my studies. My excuse is that in their habits they fully justify the title of ‘white ant’ given them by the vulgar, for they are animals quite strange to the tribe of Formicaries. Termites, sir, are not Hymenoptera; they belong to the family of the Planipennes, of the order

Neuroptera, and are consequently cousins-german to the dragon-flies, may-flies, scorpion-flies, and semblides."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Everest, but he said so with such an air of surprise and polite astonishment that the doctor could hardly keep from laughing.

"Really, sir," said he, "I ought to apologize for all the trifles I have been bothering you with. You probably think of an ant much as you do of a fish or an apple; but a little of it is your fault, for you started me on my hobby, and you should have stopped me."

Everest was about to assure the doctor of the pleasure he had had in listening to him, when he was interrupted by the noise of many voices. It was the billiard-players, who after innumerable pools were coming back into the room.

Barbarou, redder and noisier than ever, marched at their head, and, followed by the captains, was carelessly advancing towards the end, when he stopped rather confused at seeing the stranger in conversation with Holbeck.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen; I interrupt you," he said.

"Not at all," answered the doctor, who had risen. "Allow me to introduce Lord Everest, a young Englishman, travelling for amusement and information, and who did well in honouring the Boule d'Or with his presence."

Everest bowed, and the captains bowed, but rather sheepishly.

It was Barbarou who first found his tongue.

"Sir," said he, holding out his hand to the

young stranger, "I am glad to make your acquaintance, but I have a vague idea that I have seen you somewhere before."

"This morning at the railway station," said Everest.

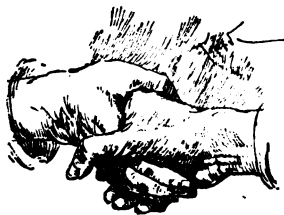
"Ah, yes! yes!" exclaimed Barbarou. "Were you not the man I nearly upset as I rushed after the omnibus to this Boule d'Or?"

"The same," said the impassible Englishman.

"Then please allow me to apologize again," continued the sailor. "The omnibus was on the go, and I was afraid I had not a moment to lose. That is the explanation of my exuberant vivacity."

"You owe me no excuses, sir," said Everest. "It is I, on the contrary, who ought to thank you for that insignificant event. It is due to it, as I have told the doctor, that I am at this moment in such pleasant society, and it may perhaps have the happiest consequences for me."

The young man firmly grasped the hand that Barbarou held out to him, and Barbarou warmly responded to the grip, asking himself all the time why this Englishman appeared so thankful for his having nearly knocked him down.







“A very restless night.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### HIS LORDSHIP'S PLANS.

AT the close of this memorable day Lord Everest passed a very restless night. It was in vain that, turn as he would, he tried to sleep. The day appeared before he had succeeded in finding rest. At the first rays of the sun he jumped out of bed, rang for the faithful John, and quickly began to dress.

What then was the cause of such unusual agitation on the part of a man whom spleen's heavy hand had so long held enthralled? Were his dismal schemes to take some new departure, or had not the bed furnished by the hostess of the Boule d'Or fulfilled its soothing promises?

Nothing of the sort. Everest could only con-

gratulate himself at having found so quiet and comfortable a room, and dismal thoughts were very far away from him; for, to the profound astonishment of John, the young man, as he proceeded with his dressing, had not once ceased whistling some of the gayest airs from a fashionable operetta.

What mysterious event had brought smiles and gladness to the face which up to then had been so gloomy with weariness?

Decidedly Dr. Holbeck and the impetuous Barbarou would have been surprised to learn that they had been the authors of this almost miraculous cure. Nevertheless to nobody else belonged the honour.

Everest had gone up to his room pursued by the memories of all that he had just heard, and after thinking over it for the whole night, had decided that without delay he would go to India.

Perhaps, he thought, it would be simpler to secure a cabin in one of the first mail-boats, and be off to these foreign shores without mentioning the scheme to anybody. But then he would fall back into the solitude which weighed on him so heavily; and he would continue to be miserable until the happy hour when fate, represented by some colossal tiger, would come to relieve him of his life. While if he could persuade the two bird-hunters to go with him, his last days would be enlivened by their cheerful company.

"In short," said he to himself, "I only ask one thing, and that is to die soon, but that is no reason why I should deprive myself of the little satisfaction that a miserly fate allows me. Never

in my life did I meet with pleasanter fellows than those two friends. Barbarou, with his inexhaustible loquacity, is as gay a companion as I could wish for; he is polite in spite of his rudeness, as far as I can judge for myself, and brave in spite of his bragging, for so the doctor says. As for him, he seems to be a very pearl amongst men, a scientist to whom his science will ensure a fortune, and armed with his gold spectacles, braves every day a thousand dangers in order to reach the solution of the modest scientific problem he has set himself to work out."

Everest then arose, with his mind made up to leave for India by the quickest route, and to take the two bird-hunters with him. Once he had come to this decision, he thought of acting on it immediately, and was going to send John to inform the two travellers that he was anxious to speak with them. But reflecting that his haste might appear somewhat boyish, he resolved to wait till breakfast-time.

At length the clock struck ten, and at the first stroke Everest hurried down to the dining-room. He was the first to arrive, and took his seat. Some of the captains came in after him, gave him the usual greetings, and sat down. The negro began to serve the breakfast. The two naturalists did not put in an appearance. Everest was boiling over with impatience.

Suddenly the door noisily opened and Barbarou appeared, followed by the man with the gold spectacles. Recognizing the young Englishman, they came round to shake hands with him and then sat down by his side.

Conversation immediately began. Again hunting adventures became the subject, and the irrepressible Barbarou narrated a few of his exploits against the savage denizens of the forest.

Everest waited for the end of the meal before he touched on his scheme, and when the coffee was finished, and Holbeck rose to leave the table, the young Englishman also rose and said,—

“I should be glad if you and Mr. Barbarou would accord me a few minutes’ conversation.”

The doctor gave a sign of assent, and, accompanied by the sailor, followed Everest towards the space between the two windows.

“Gentlemen,” said the young man, when they had seated themselves in the comfortable arm-chairs of Madame Ducoux, “the communication I am about to make to you is of immense importance to me. The whole of my future depends on what I am now doing—that is to say, the few months that I have to live.” Holbeck and Barbarou looked at each other, very much surprised at this preamble, but Everest continued unmoved,—

“It is necessary, in the first place, that you should know that I am the possessor of a large—a very large—fortune, much too large for me, in fact it is one of the burdens of my existence. I am beholden to it for only one satisfaction, and that satisfaction—a very small one—is that there are no such things as obstacles as far as I am concerned. It matters not to me what the next day may bring forth; and after the conversation I had with you, doctor, yesterday, I made up my mind that I would start for India as quickly as

I could, and that I would ask you to go with me."

"Nothing is easier," said the doctor, "for we are going to the same place; we can travel together."

"Yes; but I should like—" Here Everest appeared to hesitate; he stammered out rather than said, "I should like you to go with me—not that you should enter my service, but that I should be sure you would not leave me for some specified time, which we could settle. In order that you may do so, I will give you an indemnity, which you yourselves can fix, to leave the house of Menneval, and follow me on my travels."

Everest waited with anxiety for the answer of the two friends. Holbeck knit his brows; Barbarou became redder than was his wont.

At length the doctor broke the silence.

"I see, sir," said he, coldly, "that you have made a mistake about us. We are under engagement to the house of Menneval, but neither I nor my friend Barbarou is in any one's service."

"Oh, sir!" interrupted Everest, with much feeling, "do you think I intended to insult a man like you—a scientist whose character inspires me with so much respect and sympathy? I am a foreigner, and not quite master of your language. My words have doubtless misinterpreted my thoughts."

"I am sure of it," quickly replied Holbeck, somewhat softened; "but, to my great regret, it is impossible for either myself or my friend to accept your proposal. Although we are independent enough to travel to suit our fancy, v

we are bound to the Mennevals by formal engagements."

"We will never work for a rival house," added Barbarou.

"You see it is impossible," continued Holbeck.

"It only remains, then," said Everest, "for me to apologize for having bothered you with my indiscreet invitation. For a moment it seemed that fortune smiled on me. For the first time for many years I felt a little pleasure in planning this. Alas! I see that fate is against me. Good-bye, gentlemen."

Poor Everest had such an unhappy look as he said these words that Barbarou felt quite troubled. "Well," said he, all of a sudden, "I don't see, young sir, that you need regret it so much. It is true that Holbeck is a learned fellow that one would like to have with him—for he knows everything, the wretched little man!—but as for me, with my scarecrow of a head, I should not make much of a body-guard. As for servants like us, you can find them, if you like, thirteen to the dozen."

"Tut, tut, tut!" interrupted Holbeck, in his turn; "we did not understand each other at first, but we can arrange it. What part of India do you think of going to?"

"I do not know," answered Everest, again bewildered by his disappointment. "It does not matter where I go."

"What! it does not matter?" exclaimed Holbeck.

"I mean to say that I have no fixed plan," continued the young man. "I want to go into

the interior, for I am only going to India to hunt the big game."

"Well, then, in my turn," continued the doctor, "I will make you a proposition. Neither have we any settled plan. We are going to India in search of birds, animals' skins, and rare insects. All through the country where these things are found game is never wanting. Consequently we will make you an offer. Come with us!"

"Come with you?" asked Everest, in a trembling voice.

"That is to say," continued the doctor, "that you are in no way bound. You can hunt, while we collect. You follow our road or we follow yours, for, as I tell you, we are free to go where we please. If you have had enough of our society you can leave us, or if we do not care for yours we can leave you. In a word, we will travel like three friends—perhaps like three good friends—and that is all. Will that do for you?"

"Will that do for me?" exclaimed Everest. "My dear Dr. Holbeck, you are an angel! Allow me," and he shook the doctor's hand with such vigour as almost to shake off the celebrated spectacles. "Oh, sir!" added Everest, as he turned to Barbarou, "I am indeed glad!"

But doubtless Barbarou's red face did not remind him of an angel's, either with or without spectacles, for he gave his hand a much gentler grip.

The doctor, to seal the compact, ordered in the necessary ingredients for the composition of the Schiedam mixture—"tonic and strengthening"—and before the three steaming glasses the bases of the future alliance were settled.

A week afterwards the *Hougly*, one of the magnificent boats of the Messageries Maritimes, glided majestically out of the harbour of Marseilles, with a long plume of smoke floating behind her.

From the after-deck three passengers contemplated the splendid panorama of the roadstead, with its hundreds of vessels, its picturesque islands, its superb framework of bare rocky mountains, at the foot of which lay the vast amphitheatre of the great Phocæan city.

"Now, confess, Lord Everest, that Marseilles is the finest city in the world," said one of the passengers to his neighbour, with a strong Provençal accent.

But the Englishman made no reply. With a frown he fixedly regarded the sunny shore that he was so rapidly leaving. Suddenly he held out his hand, made a gesture of adieu, or of menace, and murmured, "Farewell, old Europe! may I never see you again!"

"Bah!" said a little man with a white cravat who was standing near. "Do not be too sure of that, my friend; we shall see it again some day."







The vessel drove forward in huge leaps.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ARRIVAL.

THE magnificent fleet of the Messageries has no speedier craft than the *Hougly*. On the morning of the eighteenth day after leaving Marseilles the mail boat sighted the coast of India.

At the first cry of "Land ho!" the passengers had tumbled up out of their cabins. Grouped on the deck, they directed their greedy gaze towards a low monotonous coast partly hidden from them by heavy clouds. Opinions as to the first look of the country so rich in legendary lore were interchanged. Some did not conceal their disappointment; others, of easier disposition, or perhaps afflicted with incurable shortsightedness, went into ecstasies over the view in all good faith, or admired it without seeing it.

Doctor Holbeck, as one of the shortsighted,

threw in his lot with the enthusiastic group, although his famous gold spectacles might have made him more cautious.



"And there," said he, in quite a lyrical tone, is the sacred soil of India, the cradle of all our science and civilization, that favoured land where man first found the chain with which he is linked to the lowest living form, and on his brow engraved the lofty thoughts of me-

tempsychois. Is it not beautiful?" said he, turning to Everest.

"It may be beautiful close to, but it is very ugly from a distance," said the young Englishman phlegmatically.

"There you are!" interrupted the illustrious Barbarou. "Beautiful! Ugly! For my part, I see nothing but clouds, which, you may depend upon it, will give us a drenching in a minute or two."

The captain, who was passing at the moment, heard what he said, and observed,—

"You are right, sir; those clouds bode us no good."

"We are unlucky," said the doctor. "Seventeen days under a scorching sun for our passage, and the bad weather when we arrive! Happily we shall be at Bombay in an hour or so; shall we not, captain?"

"In an hour!" exclaimed the captain. "You cannot have given it a thought. I shall be only too glad to come to an anchor in Bombay har-

hour before the evening. See how those clouds are piling up; we shall soon be in the thick of it, and very lucky we shall be if we find the Kanheri. I must leave you, gentlemen, and keep an eye on the squall."

The captain had hardly gone before large drops of rain fell on the deck. A shiver seemed to run over the sea, the waves rose threateningly, and the ship began to pitch.

The passengers hurried into the saloon. Holbeck alone refusing to retire, his two friends remained with him, and wrapped in their mackintoshes, which John had been sent for, they prepared to watch the raging sea.

The storm grew with a rapidity and intensity terrible to contemplate. Assailed by the furious surge, the vessel drove forward in huge leaps. At every bound her iron frame creaked ominously. The sea every now and then dashed on to the deck, and washed about the seats and benches.

Holbeck refused to quit his post. Holding on for support, he tried to pierce the gloom and discover this coast of India, which seemed to be but a deceitful apparition. In vain the water swept round his little legs, trickled down his gold spectacles, and, worse than all, saturated the lovely green veil with which he had ornamented his helmet. But the good doctor had lost all his philosophy and was indulging in bitter regrets.

"To be shipwrecked in sight of port!" he murmured.

"Well, is that not the image of life?" asked Everest, who impassably watched the furious sea. "Man fights against his fate, he seems to come

victorious from the strife, and death strikes him just as he is going to enjoy his triumph; happy is he who never knows the bitterness of him who is always beaten and strives in vain for deliverance."

"Ta, ta, ta; you soon shut us up, my lord," quickly answered Holbeck. "I believe it was understood, once for all, that you gave us a year to work your cure in, and that till then you were to leave off those dismal invocations to Proserpine. For my part, I beg to say that it will be no consolation to me to die on those reefs that I see away there, or to furnish a meal to one of the sharks that have been following us for the last week; for, in the first place, I want to see you cured of that abominable malady of yours, which is unworthy of a good-hearted, brave, intelligent lad like you; and, in the second, because I would leave incomplete the great work of my life, my monograph on ants, which I know no other man in Europe is capable of finishing."

"Will you listen to my advice?" said Barbarou, who was stooping down on the deck and sheltering from the shower. "You are only wasting your time in arguing like that; the squall is not worth the honour you are paying it. There is nothing in it to be alarmed at. What do you say to my telling you what happened to me when I went round the Cape in the *Crocodile*? The first wave that came aboard swept the deck as clean as a dining-table, and the ship, just like a cork, was seized by the waves, which seemed mountains high, and pitched—"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Holbeck with a sigh. "Your shipwreck, Barbarou, is the most

pathetic I ever heard of, but that does not make our present position any more satisfactory. You see we have now got the cape round on the southwest, that is to say we have turned our backs on India. We shall not reach Bombay before morning, if we ever reach it. There is no good in stopping here to be drenched in this way. Let us go and have a glass of Schiedam, that will warm us up, and perhaps make us take a more lively view of the future."

"Agreed!" exclaimed Barbarou, with enthusiasm, and the three friends went below.

And the term friends which we have applied to our heroes must not be taken as a mere matter of form. Holbeck, Barbarou, and Everest had really and truly become most excellent friends since we saw them leave the Boule d'Or together. A friendship of eighteen days, you say? Well, the friendship was genuine, all the same.

Everest had not been slow to unbosom himself to his new companions. He had told them of his troubles, his griefs, his dismal anticipations. Holbeck had been deeply moved at the recital, and had made up his mind to undertake the cure of this wounded spirit. Barbarou, with a less sensitive temperament, but unaffectedly good-natured, had promised to second the doctor's efforts. While Holbeck, as a scientific man and a naturalist, hoped to give his patient a desire for life by awakening in him a love for the secrets of entomology, the sailor hoped to save Everest by some dramatic adventure, which would result in the Englishman, from sheer gratitude, resolving to live his life in peace or continue to share their adventurous career.

The young man had quickly discovered the conspiracy between his companions, and, recognizing its disinterestedness, had allowed the trial to be made. He had besides welcomed it with so much good-will that the short voyage had appeared much shorter, and he was already dreading the moment when he would leave the ship and again have to mix in society with other men.

The mail-boat continued to drive along at full steam away from the Indian coast, and the three friends sipped their grog as quietly as the tremendous rolling allowed them. About the middle of the day the wind fell and the sky cleared up a little. The *Hougly* again headed towards the land, and was soon hailed by one of the pilot brigs on the station, which had sighted her in the morning and came off in search.



The waves were too rough to allow the pilot to board, and so the steamer had to follow the brig as she showed the way.

The passengers were again on deck. The sight of the little brig by the side of the imposing mass of the *Hougly* in the still angry sea was well worthy of their admiration. Rising with a leap to the crests of the waves, and plunging till she was half-hidden in their furrows of foam, she led the colossus through the labyrinth of reefs which render the approach to Bombay so dangerous. On each side of her the surges broke with fury on to the rocks that lay just at the water-level. A ship attempting the

narrow channel without a guide would, it was obvious, inevitably be lost.

Holbeck, who followed the proceedings of the pilot with much interest, could not help exclaiming,—

“There, my lord, are gallant fellows who every day sacrifice their lives—but only to save those of others.”

The young man slightly frowned at this remark, for its meaning was unmistakable; but to atone for the doctor's thoughtlessness Barbarou immediately broke in with,—

“Those fellows do not do anything so very extraordinary, for they are covered with cork from head to foot. What do you say to the pilots at the mouth of the Senegal, who in taking you over the bar are pleased to capsize their boat in order that they may fish you out from the foaming waves, and carry you to land on their shoulders? That's the sort of man for me!”

Everest was obliged to laugh. Barbarou was content. The cloud had fled.

Meanwhile the *Hougly* had come through the channel and entered the calm water. The roadstead, one of the finest in the world, presented itself to the travellers under an aspect of deep gloom; the heavy grey sky, the torrential rain, and the shipping and the banks hidden in a thick mist, formed a very unattractive spectacle. Notwithstanding Holbeck's enthusiasm at reaching the long-wished-for land, he had considerable difficulty in expressing his admiration.

Scarcely had the steamer cast anchor at about a hundred yards from the shore than she was

surrounded by a crowd of little boats, loaded with natives, who in the twinkling of an eye jumped out of them, swarmed up to the assault along the ladders, and stormed the deck. The gallant boatmen feared the rain more for their clothes than their skins, for they were all as naked as Polynesians. Seeing themselves surrounded by this crowd of yelling, capering savages, the passengers might well think that the captain of the *Hougly* had made a mistake, and instead of bringing them to Bombay, the capital of the western presidency of British India, had delivered them over to some cannibal tribe of the South Seas.

The alarm of the timid changed into terror when they found the savages precipitating themselves on to them, and snatching from them their umbrellas, bags, portmanteaus, and indulging in the most incomprehensible vociferations.

Holbeck, attacked in this way, defended himself gallantly with his umbrella, and kept his aggressors at a distance, but he would infallibly have succumbed had it not been for the opportune arrival of Everest and Barbarou, who came up from the saloon with their bags and rushed to their friend's help.

At the sight of this reinforcement the savages fell back, and the doctor, purple with anger, at length found sufficient voice to shout to them,—

“The first man that touches my bag, I will impale him!”

At this terrible threat one of the savages bowed his face to the ground, and in a humble voice said, in broken English,—

“We want take you hotel.”





"The first man that touches my bag, I will impale him."



"I know," answered Holbeck, "but you must not lay hands on me or on my bag."

And the storm ended in the travellers coming to an understanding with the terrible savages, who were only excessively zealous hotel touts, and the doctor handed over to one of them the care of himself and friends. The three left the ship, and, with their luggage, installed themselves in a narrow canoe. There was still a considerable swell on the sea, notwithstanding the sheltered roadstead, and Barbarou, finding himself seated in this nutshell, could not help thinking of the Senegal boatmen, who half-drown their passengers in order to have the merit of saving them.

However, the boat, in spite of its heavy load, flew through the water, and in a few minutes reached the end of the Apollo bandar, a long embankment of stone which runs well out in front of the harbour.

But here came another difficulty. It was necessary to leave the boat and step on to the stairs that lead to the quay—an operation that looked simple enough, but which the agitation of the waves rendered somewhat dangerous. Barbarou, active as a monkey, made one jump from the boat to the steps, and was up them in an instant. Everest, with more calmness, waited his opportunity, put his foot on the lowest step as the wave retired, and, without hurrying himself, walked up the two or three above it before the wave returned. Holbeck, who was watching him, resolved to imitate this manœuvre, and lightly jumped on to the lowest step; but b

he had set foot on the second the wave came back, covered him up to the waist, and would assuredly have swept him off had not Everest seized him in his arms and snatched him out of danger.

"I owe you one, my friend," said the doctor warmly, as he reached the level of the quay. "Without you I should really have been shipwrecked in harbour!"

Meanwhile the porters had brought the luggage and put it on the now-deserted quay, for the rain was falling in torrents; and the other passengers, more experienced than our three friends, had as soon as they arrived chartered the vehicles in attendance and gone off into the town.

A solitary Indian, with a face the colour of soot, wearing a green uniform and an immense turban, was taking shelter in a sentry-box and gloomily contemplating the grey sky pouring down its unceasing deluge. At the sight of the travellers he resolved, with much apparent regret, to leave his shelter and advance to meet them, and then, pointing with his finger to the luggage, he said, with the tone of an automaton, "Anything to declare?"

"No, sir; nothing that I know of," answered Holbeck, who was the spokesman of the party.

The Indian continued to examine the baggage with that inquisitorial eye which is characteristic of custom-house officers in every part of the world; but, favoured doubtless with the gift of double vision, he seemed satisfied with this merely superficial examination, and, without opening a box, passed to the examination of the travellers themselves.

Everest, Barbarou, and the unobtrusive John seemed to inspire the scrupulous functionary with no suspicion; but not so Holbeck.

"What have you got there?" asked he at length.

"There?" said Holbeck, in rather an alarmed tone; "nothing—at least, nothing to declare; it is only a microscope."

"A microscope?" said the questioner, becoming defiant. "Let me see it."

"But I would remark, sir," said the doctor, humbly, "that it is raining hard, and that the rain may damage the delicate instrument."

"Open your umbrella!" said the officer, impatiently.

Holbeck understood that he must obey. He opened his umbrella, drew the microscope out of his bag, and, after taking it out of its case, showed it to the Indian.

The custom-house officer frowned as he examined the instrument, and then said very coldly, "It is well, sir; the article is not subject to duty. You can put it back. But you ought to know that it is not permitted to play jokes on men in authority."

"What, sir?" said Holbeck, quite astounded.

"Know," continued the customs officer, "that I am quite aware that what you call a microscope is nothing but a revolver. Go, gentlemen; you can pass."

And with great majesty the officer regained his sentry-box, leaving the doctor completely overwhelmed at having discovered a British functionary ignorant enough to mistake a microscope for a six-shooter.

The rain continued to descend in torrents. The travellers remained alone on the quay, looking out for some vehicle to take them into the town, the first houses of which appeared through the mist about a mile off on the other side of a vast esplanade. But the quay and the esplanade were deserted. They decided then to walk to their promised lodgings, and to let the porters follow on with the luggage.

Drenched with the rain, and wading through liquid mud, they at last reached the neighbourhood of the fort, and by dark and narrow streets gained the Royal Hotel, to which their guide led them.

The hotel-keeper, a large Parsee, clothed in a long robe of black cloth bordered with red, and wearing a cardboard cap very like a mitre, received them obsequiously.

"What do these gentlemen desire?" asked he.

"What we desire!" said Holbeck, who was getting impatient. "Your eyesight must be good! We desire three rooms where we can dry ourselves and rest a little after our promenade through the swamp."

"I am indeed sorry that I cannot oblige you," answered the Parsee.

"You have no rooms for us?"

"My hotel is full. I have only one room left, but we might put three beds in that."

"But that is all I have been asking for for the last hour!" exclaimed Holbeck, in a paroxysm of anger. "Are the people of this country going to drive me mad?"

And, frantically waving his umbrella, he entered

the Royal Hotel as if he had carried the position at the point of the bayonet.

In a minute or two the three friends found themselves in their room.

"What a beginning!" exclaimed Holbeck, dropping on to a chair.

Everest said nothing; all this had diverted him more than he could express.

As for Barbarou, he walked up and down the room. Suddenly he raised his arms and his eyes to the ceiling, which consisted merely of a calico sheet that hid the roof, and exclaimed, with fervid emphasis,—

"Oh! dream of my childhood! Oh! gorgeous sky of India, at last I behold you!"





“Custom of the country!” said Everest calmly.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BANQUET OF THE SHARKS.

HALF an hour after their arrival the three travellers, thanks to John, had made good all damages received at their landing. The doctor had abandoned his travelling jacket for his best black coat, and looked exactly like a notary. Barbarou had resumed his beloved garb of a merchant captain, and Lord Everest had become the correct gentleman we met at Marseilles.

“This hotel,” said Holbeck, “seems to me a very wretched shanty, but there is none better in the country.”

“At Bombay; that is to say, in the town,” observed Everest. “I looked up Murray on the subject. But there are better in the suburbs, and I would suggest, that if it is your intention



to stop here, we go in search of a more comfortable place to-morrow."

"Meanwhile," said Barbarou, "let the hotel be good or bad, it seems to me that the time has come for us to try its cookery. I do not know what time it is, but my inside has long since sounded the dinner-hour."

"It is at this moment noon at Marseilles," said Everest, consulting his watch.

"And that means, unless I am mistaken, six o'clock at Bombay," said the doctor.

He had scarcely finished when the loud roar of a gong made the wooden walls of the hotel shake again.

"That is dinner!" shouted Barbarou, with much glee, recognizing a signal in the unusual disturbance.

The three friends came down from their room in great haste. To reach the dining-room they had to cross a verandah crowded with drinkers, who, lolling about in careless attitudes, were preparing for dinner by the free absorption of brandy or bitter beer.

The dining-room was a large hall with an immense table in its centre covered with fruits and flowers and glass. Above the table and along the whole length of the room hung a frame of wood covered with calico, which was swinging backwards and forwards by cords leading away from it and served as a gigantic fan.

Our three friends took their seats; the guests, both ladies and gentlemen, came in, and soon the table was full. The native butler quietly clapped his hands. Instantly a crowd of servants clothed

in long white robes and wearing large turbans began to serve the soup. Each domestic brought in a plate and placed it in front of one of the diners, and, having done so, stood upright and motionless behind the chair with arms folded.

Barbarou was the first to notice that they were not being served; but Holbeck calmed his impatience by pointing out that as they were the last to arrive it was only just that they should be the last to be served. He was still speaking when again at a signal from the butler the servants started off all together, took away the plates, and replaced them by others containing the first service, and again stood motionless.

At this Barbarou, who, like his friends, sat in front of his empty plate, could contain himself no longer. Seizing his knife, he jingled it furiously against his glass.

The unusual sound seemed to astound the attendants. The diners paused in their silent mastication, and, shocked and surprised, looked up at the author of this unpardonable proceeding, and then, having recognized him as merely a French sailor, they gave their heads a disdainful toss and continued their rapid process of deglutition.

Barbarou, seeing no one coming, continued his carillon without troubling himself about the company.

At last the master of the establishment approached, scared almost out of his wits, and bending down confidentially between the doctor and the Marseillais, whispered to them,—

“For goodness’ sake stop this disturbance.

My table is only frequented by gentlemen, and a noise like this will bring discredit on my house. What can I do to please you?"

"This is too much!" exclaimed Holbeck, whose anger had begun to rise; "he asks what he can do to please us! By George, man, can't you give us something to eat?"

"To eat?" exclaimed the hotel-keeper, quite astonished.

"Has he gone mad?" asked the doctor, all of a fume. "Do you think we have sat down here to see other people eat?"

A ray of light seemed to penetrate the obtuse cranium of the Parsee.

"I see what it is," he said, "these gentlemen possibly have not got khitmatgars?"

"What's that?" said Holbeck.

"The khitmatgar is the domestic that waits at table," answered the hotel-keeper.

"Call my servant, will you?" interrupted Lord Everest.

"Impossible, my lord," answered the Parsee, "your servant is European, and he cannot wait at table with natives, for they would lose their caste."

"Well," exclaimed Barbarou, "you can do what you like; get us khitmatgars or Chinamen just as you please, but if you don't give me my dinner I'll jump on this table, I'll smash your crockery, and I'll soon put a stopper on these people eating away before my eyes."

Frightened at this horrible threat, the hotel-keeper hastened to say,—

"Stop, sir, pray; my own private servants

will wait on you, but your excellency will pardon my saying it is very unusual."

"My dinner!" said Barbarou, now become quite fierce.

The Parsee disappeared; a moment afterwards three turbaned men took up their position behind the chairs of our friends, and soon enabled them to make up for lost time.

Everest, forgetting his melancholy, followed the example of his comrades, and without a thought partook of the dishes which succeeded each other with giddy rapidity. Mulligatawny soup, fish and curried prawns, chickens and chutney, beef and red sauce, &c., &c. It was not till after the thirteenth plate that Barbarou took occasion to observe,—

"It seems to me that all these things are tremendously peppered."

"You can well say that," added Holbeck, "the dishes are worthy of Pluto's table. I can no longer feel my tongue, and I am sure that my lips are blistered. The hotel-keeper wishes to show us that we are in the proper country for spices."

"Oh!" said Everest, "we are acquainted with all these dishes in England, only we wash them down with some decent wine, whereas what they have given us here is most dreadful stuff."

"What have you to complain about?" said Barbarou. "If I am to believe the label I am already in my second bottle of Château Laffitte."

"Drink on, my friend," said Holbeck, "but put not your trust in the label. The Laffitte of

this country comes from the laboratory of some Liverpool apothecary."

The speed with which the plates succeeded each other almost stopped conversation. It was necessary to be silent and to hasten unless you wished to lag behind and disturb the harmony of the well-ordered service.

To the peppered meats there now succeeded a series of sugared confections, puddings, blanchmanges, fruit patties, guava jellies, tarts, preserves, &c.

Imitating his countrymen at the table, Everest in a slow and wearied manner attacked all that was put before him; but in spite of his apparent slowness the impetuous Holbeck had great difficulty in keeping up with him, and when the doctor saw the fruit appear he gave a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"Ha! we are nearing the end of this banquet of the sharks. My dear friend," said he to Everest, "I should like you to know that if I am doomed to feed in this way for many days I shall go off with plethora."

"Bosh!" said the young man. "It is the proper thing. Look at our neighbours, they none of them seem to suffer."

"Nevertheless," said the doctor, "the English here are said to die like flies. I see now that the climate is not the only cause. If you feed like this the climate of an earthly paradise would be fatal to the strongest stomach."

Among the fruits there was one which more than any other excited the doctor's curiosity; it was the mango, the celebrated fruit which is at

its best at Bombay. However, when Holbeck, cutting a mango in two, had taken a spoonful of the yellowish pulp, he made an atrocious grimace.

"Alas!" said he. "How can we believe what travellers say? I have read a description of the mango comparing the fruit to the nectar of Olympus, and it tastes to me like sherbet and turpentine."

"Only a question of appreciation," said Everest philosophically. "Perhaps after a fortnight of turpentine the throat would get so accustomed to it that it could not do without it. In London the publicans under the name of gin are said to sell petroleum broken down with a little alcohol, and the people are quite indignant if they are deprived of the delightful mixture."

At last the meal reached its close. The ladies rose and left the room, while the gentlemen, after saluting their departure with a mere attempt at a rise, resumed their seats. The servants removed the cloth and covered the table with glasses and bottles of gin, brandy, whisky, and other alcoholic drinks. Everest took a case out of his pocket and offered a cigar to his companions.

"My dear friends," said he, "I can hardly express my happiness at finding myself at last in this land of India, where a secret presentiment warns me that I shall find the catastrophe of my sorrowful fate."

"Everest!" said Holbeck, interrupting him, in a tone of friendly reproach. "And our bargain?"

"I forget it not!" continued the young man;

“and I promise to do all I can to help you to attain the result you desire. Only I have yet another favour to ask of friend Holbeck. He knows how all money matters are painful to me—the sight of a gold coin fills me with distress; and consequently I beg him to become the administrator of our finances—the manager of our expedition—with the consent of Barbarou, of course, understood.”

“Barbarou is agreeable,” said the Marseillais.

“From to-day,” continued Everest, “let the doctor have charge of the cash-box; he it is who will arrange and pay and engage. I know it is a heavy task I am asking him to assume, but I appeal to the goodness of his heart, for my recovery is concerned.”

“Oh! the artfulness of the man!” exclaimed Holbeck. “Just as I was going to refuse he appeals to my feelings. But it is too bad what you ask. I shall have to make notes and keep accounts.”

“We don’t want any notes or accounts,” replied Everest. “Each puts what he can spare into the fund, and when there is no more money it is because there is no more.”

“Oh, I see!” said Holbeck. “Quite so! When we put in a penny you put in a pound. No, no; we must go equal shares.”

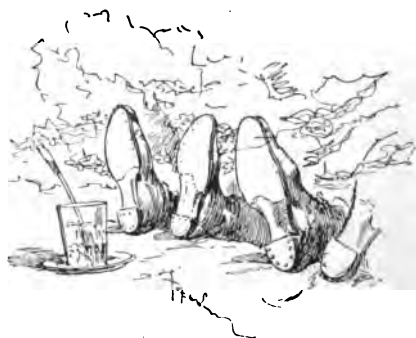
“Doctor,” said the young Englishman imploringly.

“Well, I will say neither yes nor no; we will arrange it by-and-by;” and as he said so the good doctor jumped up from his chair as if he had been stung by one of his own *cryptoceri*.

He had just turned his head a little, and behold ! in front of him an immense pair of boots, placed in the middle of the table. To the boots belonged a pair of legs of interminable length, and the pair of legs ended in a gigantic Englishman, who was carelessly sprawling in a rocking-chair. But his astonishment became stupefaction when, following the example, Holbeck saw all the rest of his table companions in the same position, lolling at full length in their chairs and stretching their legs among the glasses and bottles on the mahogany of the table. With a scared look he demanded an explanation from his companions.

"Custom of the country," said Everest calmly. "I have often seen old Indian officers put their feet on the table after meals."

"Oh, indeed !" said Holbeck. "The custom is not particularly elegant, but travellers are always learning something. For my part, I only stretch myself when I go to bed. Let us go."







“ I see in your face that you are disappointed ! ”

## CHAPTER IX.

### A RESTLESS NIGHT.

THE travellers regained their room, and before surrendering themselves to the pleasures of well-earned sleep proceeded to explore their apartment.

It was a large square place, with white plastered walls. Rice-straw matting, fine and silky, covered the floor, but the ceiling was only a cloth hooked up to the rafters and ornamented with several holes, through which the roof was visible. A few cane chairs and two dressing-tables were the only furniture. We were forgetting, however, the three beds so pompously announced by the Parsee hotel-keeper. Ranged in battle array in the centre of the room, they looked, with their high mosquito curtains, more like catafalques. It was towards them that the prudent Holbeck first advanced.

"Certainly," said he, "this room is not a palace; but I have seen better at St. Louis on the Senegal, and even at Rio Janeiro. The great thing is that the beds should be passable; that they should be good would be asking too much."

And, opening one of the curtains, he peeped into the interior of the muslin cage.

"Confound it!" he said, briskly withdrawing his head: "the mattress is as little and thin as a farthing jumble, and they have forgotten to give us any bed-clothes!"

"John, go and find some," said Everest. "I see, in this country, if you want anything done you must do it yourself."

"At the same time," said the doctor, "John can bring us the necessary ingredients for some Schiedam grog. It is in a case like this, my friends, that you can appreciate the virtues of such a beverage, which will allow us to struggle triumphantly against the noxious influences of a murderous climate and a villainous diet."

While John went to execute his orders Holbeck made himself comfortable in one of the chairs, took his pipe out of his pocket, deliberately loaded it, and lighted it. Then, having accomplished these different operations, he gave a long sigh of satisfaction.

"At length," said he, "we are near the close of this terrible day of arrival. Do you remember what I said to you, Everest—there is nothing more dreadful than such a day? Be it fine weather or wet weather, it is always the time of disappointment and disillusion. You arrive with your head stuffed full of what you have read about the

country, and you are astonished to see that the reality in no way resembles the picture. And it is always the same. When you first see Paris you are surprised to find the famous boulevards bordered with houses much like those of other towns; in Switzerland the mountains appear very much like hills, and the first sight of the sea is a disappointment to most people. Here doubtless you expected to land on a sandy beach shaded with palm-trees, whose summits were garlanded with creepers and flowers; a golden palki, borne by men of bronze, to lead you to a palace of marble encrusted with jasper and onyx, and turbaned servants clothed in cashmere prostrate at your feet. Do not say no! These are the pictures which I am sure vaguely floated through your mind, evoked by the magic name of India. I see in your face that you are disappointed. As for me, I am not."

"That is because you are a philosopher," interrupted Everest.

"Not at all," replied the doctor; "but I remember what happened to me with one of the most illustrious poets of our time. His works made my heart thrill, and I thought of the happiness I should have in beholding the immortal genius face to face. The happiness was accorded me. One day I met with the poet at one of my friends'. The Titan had the face and figure of a tradesman retired from business; and when he opened his mouth it was to complain of a cold in the head, which he had had for a week. Countries are like men; you must not judge them by appearances."

"But, my dear Holbeck," said Everest, "you are not making enough of it. Do you really think I was silly enough to pass judgment in that daring fashion on a country in which I have barely set foot? I admit that at first sight it is not very promising, and that I should not have been sorry for your gilded palki to get across the flat through which we had to paddle, but I hope that we shall manage that sort of thing in time, and that the country will prove more hospitable to us as we go on."

"Ah! at last here is John," said Barbarou, repressing a yawn, for these philosophical dissertations had a soporific tendency.

The servant entered, carrying a tray with the glasses and bottles. Behind him came the hotel-keeper.

"My lord," said the Parsee, addressing Everest, "I have come myself to inquire what you want, for your servant cannot make it clear to me what it is."

"They have forgotten to put the clothes on the beds," said the young man.

"Clothes!" repeated the Parsee, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, clothes!" said Holbeck, who had evidently become very irritable; "clothes to cover the beds."

"Clothes!" said the hotel-keeper. "But I have not got any!"

"What! you have not got any?" exclaimed the doctor, bounding from his chair. "Is this a new species of the dinner joke? If so, please say how you go to bed in this country!"

"We people," said the Parsee, "lie on the ground on the mats, but European gentlemen lie on the beds."

"With their clothes on?"

"Yes, sir."

"Really!" said the doctor, somewhat abashed.

"It is so, sir," continued the Parsee. "It will be easy for you to-morrow to procure clothes of very fine soft silk which are used for the purpose. It would be impossible for you to go to bed in any other way; you would be stifled in a European bed, or else you would be devoured by mosquitoes."

"You are right," said Holbeck, a little ashamed of his hastiness. "We will do as the rest do. You can retire."

The hotel-keeper left them, followed by John, who went off to the small room which had been secured for him in a corner of the hotel.

"In short," said Barbarou, "this is quite a country of savages, and is no better than the Gaboon. Just look! The windows have no glass in them, they are only luffer-shutters. And half the laths are missing. If we were on the ground floor I am sure the jackals could get into the room, as they did one day when—"

But the gallant sailor did not finish his yarn, for he suddenly dropped the light he held in his hand and rolled on to the ground with a fearful yell. The light went out as it fell, and the room was plunged in profound darkness.

Everest rapidly felt his way to his companion's assistance, while Holbeck, who was compounding the Schiedam grog, was so startled that he upset the table and all that was on it.

All the time Barbarou seemed to be fighting in the dark with some mysterious enemy, and keeping up a continual roar. Everest was unable to reach the Marseillais; in his hurry he ran up against one of the beds, fell sprawling into the curtains, and got wrapped up in their folds as if he had been in a net.

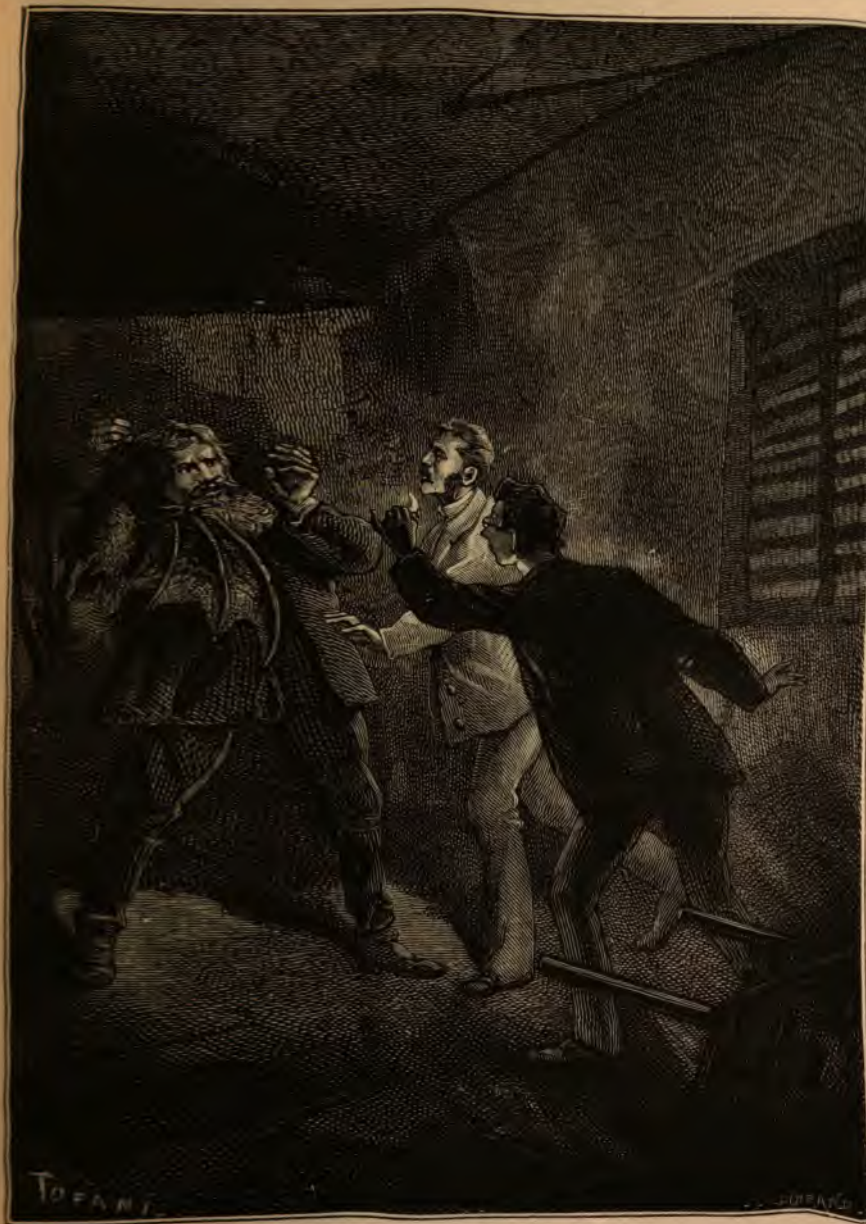
Holbeck, in quite an agony, heard the imprecations of the Englishman mingled with the yells of Barbarou, and felt his heart fail him. Thoughts of Thugs, of garroters, of Dacoits, rushed through his brain. With all the force of his lungs he shouted for help, and at the same time, remembering that he had some wax matches, he endeavoured to throw a little light on the scene of carnage; but the matches had shared in his bath when he arrived and refused to strike.

At last the voice of Barbarou rose again above the uproar, and the trembling doctor heard him exclaim, in a tone of triumph,—

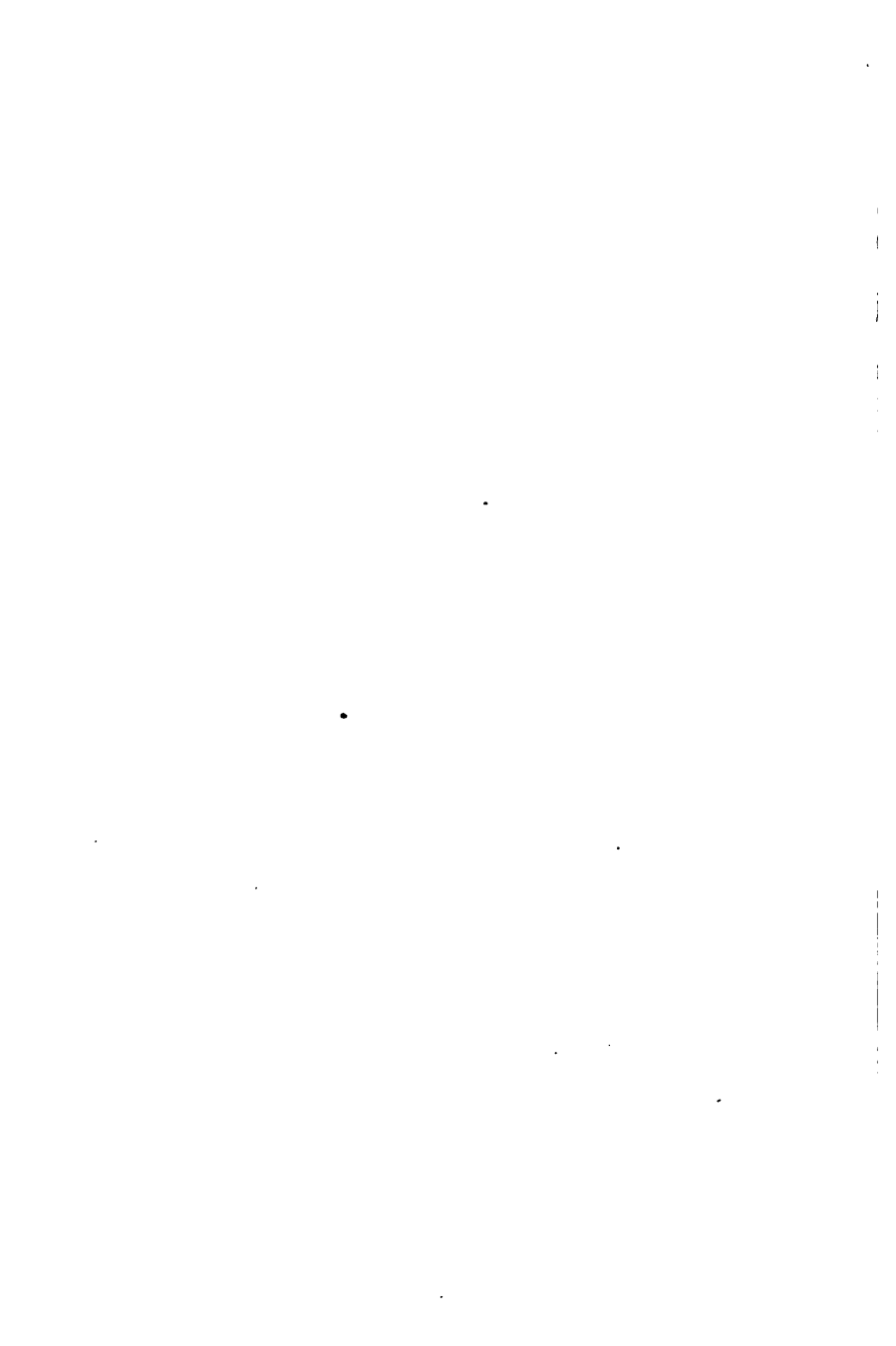
“Ah! I’ve got him this time! I think I’ve strangled him!”

With a frenzied scrape Holbeck lit one of the matches, and by its feeble glimmer beheld Barbarou standing in front of him with his hand all covered with blood, and holding up an animal of unfamiliar shape.

“I was talking about jackals,” began the sailor. “Here is one that can boast of having given me a fright. I never should have believed that an animal could jump like this; he seized hold of my throat, and in a little more I should have been strangled. And he has got pointed teeth, which stuck into my fingers like needles.”



“Ah! I’ve got him this time!”





Everest having been rescued from the mosquito curtain, and the doctor having lighted the candle, the animal underwent a careful examination.

"But," said Holbeck, "this is no jackal; this is a bat."

And, taking hold of it, he extended the long membranes, which made it look like a fox furnished with a demon's wings.

"Yes," said he, "it is a roussette, and a better one than I ever saw in a museum. Look, its wings have a spread of nearly a yard. With its russet coat, slender head, pointed ears, and pointed snout, it is well worthy of its popular name of the flying fox. But it is only a bat; the queen of the cheiroptera, it is true. It is *Pteropus edulis*, a common Indian species, and derives its name from its cookery qualities. They say its flesh is equal in flavour and delicacy to a wild rabbit. And so, Barbarou, the author of all your terror was only a bat."

"I don't see," said Barbarou, rather humiliated, "that there is anything agreeable in being throttled by a vampire."

"Oh! a vampire!" said the doctor. "That is a libel; the roussette is an honest, inoffensive sort of a bat. He had no intention of sucking your blood. He was attracted by the light, and accidentally knocked up against you, and then, losing his balance, he seized hold of your neck. The embrace of his cold sticky wings is not likely to have been very pleasant, and had I been in your



place I should probably have shouted just as much."

"The best part of all this is," said Everest, "that not a soul came to see what the row was about. We must not trust to other people's help in this country."

"Well," said the doctor, "the adventure will add a curious specimen to our collection, but on this occasion we must dispense with the Schiedam, for glasses and bottles went to the ground with Barbarou."

To console themselves for their mishap and to stifle their emotions, the three friends retired to their respective beds, or rather disappeared beneath the mosquito curtains and stretched themselves half-dressed on the mattress.

In a few seconds Barbarou and Everest were sound asleep. Holbeck was awake for some time, the state of excitement in which he had passed the day prevented his resuming his habitual calm.



At length weariness triumphed, and he slept, but his sleep was troubled with a nightmare. He dreamt that he had been shipwrecked, and had taken refuge in a cavern, where he was attacked by hideous monsters. Suddenly he found himself a prisoner in a house on fire; the fire-bell sounded the alarm, the firemen sent the streams of water on to the flaming partitions, but a strange torpor prevented

Holbeck from moving, and he beheld himself the

prey of the flames. At length he made a super-human effort—and awoke.

At first he thought the dream was a reality; the sound of bells filled the room, and water was trickling over his face. With a bound he was out of bed, but the cool grey light of the morning showed him his mistake.

Outside, the rain was falling in torrents, and the doctor found that the water had come through the roof, and, running along the calico ceiling, was streaming into the room. It seemed that this was nothing extraordinary, and had been provided for, inasmuch as copper basins had been placed at the corners to receive the main droppings. It was the drops falling on to the metal of the basins that gave the bell-like sounds. The rain-water in other places, but in lesser quantity, was coming through on to the furniture and the beds.

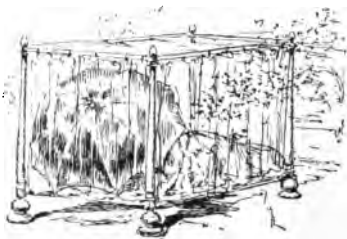
What was to be done? Holbeck remained undecided. His comrades were bravely sleeping through the rain. To wake them would be cruel; on the other hand, it would never do to let them get soaked. A sudden inspiration struck him. Spying their umbrellas at the side of the room, he opened them, and placed one inside the curtains over the head of each of the sleepers, and then, having prepared a similar shelter for himself, he laid himself down.

The thought of his companions sleeping calmly beneath the umbrellas made him smile.

“Why have we not an artist with us?” he said to himself; “he would have a fine subject for an allegorical tableau. Youth and strength, per-

sonified by Everest and Barbarou, reposing beneath the shield of Science."

And, quite contented with himself, he fell off to sleep.





"I beg to offer you my services."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ANIMAL HOSPITAL.

THE storm had passed, and the sun, already high above the horizon, was filling the room with its joyous rays when Holbeck was awakened by the laughter of his companions. The explosion of gaiety was caused by the sight, so little expected by the sleepers, of the three umbrellas placed triumphantly over the beds. With a jump the doctor arose and rejoined Everest and Barbarou, who were already sitting down to the early breakfast just brought in by the faithful John.

"It seems I have been taking it easy," said he, in a jovial tone, "but I deserved to do so. Had it not been for me you would have awoke this morning crippled with rheumatism."

He then related the incidents of the night,

which had formed so worthy a finish to those of the evening.

As they finished their breakfast of tea and toast Everest exclaimed,—

“And now to work. Let us arrange the plan of our future operations.”

“Bother!” said Barbarou. “There you go! Let us have a little time to breathe. We have hardly got here yet. Have you already had enough of Bombay, when you have not even seen it?”

“To tell the truth,” said Everest, “Bombay interests me very little. I am anxious to throw myself entirely into that exciting life of adventure that both of you have described so warmly. Every minute that separates us from our departure seems an age to me.”

“Keep calm!” said the doctor, “I shall do nothing to hinder our going up the country. But if you will have a little patience the few days that we pass here will help your plans considerably. Let me have time to see the correspondents of our house, for whom I have letters and credits. I shall then complete the information which I have been collecting as we came along. If the purser of the *Hougly* is to be believed we shall find here a merchant in a large way named Parvou, who, it would appear, has large quantities of plumes and bird-skins in stock. Perhaps I can do some business with him, and that will allow me to satisfy the Mennevals at once, give us a good profit, and, what interests you more especially, leave us with our hands free for a few months. We can then devote them entirely to ourselves, you to hunting and I to my scientific researches.”

"That is splendid," said Everest enthusiastically. "Doctor, you are the most excellent of men."

At this moment John entered and said,—

"Here is a gentleman who wishes to speak to the doctor."

"A very early morning call," said Holbeck. "What is the gentleman like, John?"

"I cannot say exactly," replied the servant. "He looks like an officer, perhaps a general."

"A general!" exclaimed Barbarou, "but we cannot receive him with so little ceremony."

"Ask him in," said Holbeck.

John opened the door, and there entered a tall, fine-looking native with a huge turban and wearing a long robe embroidered with gold. Across his chest stretched a broad belt, which did not now, however, hold a sword; but to make up for it he carried in his hand a heavy cane with a golden knob.

The Indian saluted the three travellers with much obsequiousness, and then he asked,—

"Doctor Holbeck?"

"That is my name," said the doctor. "Do you wish to see me?"

"I have been told, sir, that you are in want of a khitmatgar, and I beg to offer you my services."

"Are you a khitmatgar?" said the surprised doctor.

"As you can see, sir, by my costume," replied the Indian.

"Bother!" said Holbeck in French to his companions. "They dress their servants well in this country. John took him for a general!"

And then he continued in English to the Indian,—

“What can you do?”

“Everything, sir; that is to say, I can wait at table, order your meals, and look after your wardrobe; but, sir, you are a gentleman, and you know that it is necessary for you to have a *baihra* to brush your clothes and clean your boots, a *mihtar* to wash out the room, a *hammal* to look after the luggage, a *bhishti* to carry the water, a *sais* for your house, a *chokra* for your dog, a *lascar* for your tent, and, above all, a *bawarchi* for a cook, without counting a *chuprasi* for errands, a—”

“That is quite enough!” interrupted Holbeck. “It is understood that I have a regiment to look after me. I had been told that you would all consider you had lost your caste if you ever worked from morning to night, but I thought it was a joke. I am satisfied now; and I see that, as far as you are concerned, you will do everything—if the others will do the rest.”

The Indian smiled a vacant smile, not having in the least understood Holbeck’s pretty little speech, and contented himself by answering with a new salutation even humbler than the first.

“Perhaps the gentleman,” added he, “will look at my testimonials, which show that I have been in the service of *sahibs* for twenty years.”

And he handed to the doctor a bundle of papers, all faded and frayed at the edges.

Holbeck opened the first with great care and read that “*Latchman* had been a faithful servant to Colonel Wood for two years, and had given



satisfaction." Those that followed informed him that Latchman, as a servant, was "good, loyal, trustworthy, intelligent," &c. In fact, the epithets varied each time, but the praise was unanimous. Latchman was the pearl of khitmatgars.

The doctor had just concluded his examination when the last testimonial attracted his eye. The paper was white and new; evidently it came from the last master. It was not a bad effort; the few conventional lines had been replaced by quite a portrait.

"I might," said the writer, "do as my predecessors have done, and get rid of this rascal by copying one of the former testimonials, on the principle that he who wants to fly should always hang; but I prefer to enlighten my successor, and give him the benefit of my experience. I have said that Latchman is a rascal. I know that the term is rather strong, for he is only a little thief, a little more of a liar, and very much more of an idler—faults, however, that disappear on a vigorous application of essence of rattan. Once this has been used, it will be found that, notwithstanding his apparent stupidity, he has the under-mentioned really excellent qualities. Latchman is very intelligent, very clever with his hands, and has great tact in getting out of difficulties when on a journey; he is not wanting in courage, and is capable of much devotion to an energetic master. But I repeat, in order to bring out these qualities, it is necessary to begin with a thorough dusting of his vicious carapace." (Signed) "T. Nixon, Major."

The doctor, be it well understood, had read this report in a very low voice, and when he reached the end he said, in French, "This Major Nixon is very kind to look after my enlightenment in this way, but I imagine that he belongs to the pessimist school, for if Latchman had double the faults he points out, and half the good qualities, I should still consider him the pearl of servants. We can well pass over a fib or two in a man who joins dexterity to intelligence, and courage to devotion, and as to what the major so cruelly calls a little of a thief, it only means he looks after his perquisites. We can hardly hang a man for that. With your approval, I will engage Latchman."

"What!" said Barbarou, "is this magnificent general going to be our servant?"

"Quite so!" answered Holbeck; "but with the aid of an innumerable army of soldiers;" and, turning towards the Indian, he continued, "Latchman, you are engaged. We will talk about your pay later on."

Then a suspicion arose in the doctor's mind.

"Can you read?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; Nagari and Arabic."

"And English?"

"Alas! no, sir."

"So much the better," said the doctor, as he handed back the testimonials. "You can begin your duties to-day; John will look after you."

The Indian bowed and retired.

"Well!" exclaimed Holbeck, "what do you think of that? Don't you think, my lord, that I played the part of chief of the expedition very

well? I am scarcely out of bed, and I have engaged a khitmatgar, and acquainted myself with the list of the long string of aids and assistants that this majestic personage requires."

"My sincere compliments," said the young man; "you began with a master-stroke. For my part I should have been incapable of such a rapid decision."

"As far as I am concerned," said Barbarou, "I should never have dared to talk in that way to such a fine gentleman. When he came in I was just going to offer him an arm-chair. Now," said Barbarou, "let us make haste. I intend to devote to-day to the marvels of this metropolis of Western India. As it is fine, let us go for a walk. To-morrow we can devote to serious business."

John was called, and assisted by Latchman, who had already got rid of his stick and his belt, set to work to open the boxes and get out for the travellers their best attire.

Holbeck, after a careful shave, went in search of a spotless cravat, but suddenly his astonished friends saw him make a regular dive into his box, and then arise with beaming visage, exclaiming,—

"Superb! It is admirable! Come and look at this marvellous work."

Notwithstanding that Everest and Barbarou opened their eyes very wide, they could see nothing, and imagined the doctor had gone crazy.

"What! you see nothing?" said Holbeck. "Don't you see that the bottom of my box is absolutely perforated with holes? Did I say holes? Genuine galleries running all over it."

Well, that is the work of termites, white ants, the work of a single night. Scenting their prey, the intelligent insects established communications between the floor and the box, and were hard at it."

And, lifting up the box, he uncovered the part of the floor on which it rested. His two friends then perceived the ground white with the ants, and streaked with their galleries.

"Had my box been there only eight hours," said the doctor emphatically, "at the end of that short lapse of time had you tried to lift it, the case and its contents would have tumbled into dust. One can imagine that at this moment this very house is perforated in all directions by these prodigious workers, and their work is so cleverly carried on that nothing reveals its importance until the day when the whole building, gnawed, mined, and swallowed, will collapse like a house of cards. Is it not admirable?"

"I see nothing admirable about it," said Barbarou, with the tone of a sceptic. "Your white ants are abominable vermin."

"Abominable! Say, rather, terrible," continued the doctor, full of enthusiasm. "We must bow down before the prodigious strength of these insects, against whom nothing can fight. A few dozen years ago termites brought over in a ship attacked the sous-prefecture at Rochelle. It had to be abandoned. In this country, where the buildings are of wood, a house once attacked is doomed."

A quarter of an hour afterwards the three travellers left the hotel, as Holbeck had suggested, to explore the curiosities of Bombay.

Scarcely had they appeared on the threshold than from all points of the horizon palkis and buggies came dashing up towards them.

Barbarou would have cheerfully shown off in a palki, but the doctor angrily declared that nothing in the world would make him consent to be carried about like a sick man shut up in a box. So they got into a buggy, a kind of high-perched cab, which is the traditional vehicle of the island. When the travellers had arranged themselves on the narrow seat, the native conductor squatted at their feet, and from this inconvenient position guided his skinny and speedy nag.

"Take us to see the bazaars," said the doctor to the coachman, and the vehicle went off at top speed.

Holbeck had made an excellent choice, for there is hardly a town in Asia which offers a more curious spectacle than these bazaars of Bombay. They are immense caravanserais, miles in length. A world of peoples and races, most varied in type and costume, throng the streets of this great city—the port of arrival for travellers from Persia, Arabia, Afghanistan, and the African coast, and that of departure for all the pilgrims from India to Mecca and the holy places of Islam. Among the crowd of natives, each wearing the special costume of his caste or his district, there passes the Persian with his Astrakhan cap, the Arab with his biblical draperies, the Negro, the Chinaman, the Burman, and the Malay, a diversity giving to the crowd a distinctiveness that no other town in the world can present. The Tower of Babel could not have gathered round its base a more complete collection of the human race.

Palkis noisily knock up against each other. Chariots surmounted with roofs of red stuffs, drawn by beautiful white long-horned oxen, pass at a gallop. Horsemen clothed in armour and carrying shields caracole by the side of elegant carriages from Paris and London. And the whole crowd speaks, cries, and quarrels with a volubility and a noise that is truly deafening.

The road is bordered by little shops, where, side by side, are sold the products of the East and the West—idols, ebony furniture, shawls, objects in copper and ivory, calicoes and woven goods from England, and gimcracks from France. It is a wonderful chaos, a prodigious jumble, astonishing and charming both artist and tourist. The houses themselves overhang the road with their balconies of carved wood, their painted fronts and the large projecting roofs ornamented with little bells and fretted boards.

Holbeck and Everest were in ecstasies, but Barbarou took matters much more coolly.

“All this is very curious,” said he, “but the whole town has got a most insupportable stench.”

“Certainly,” said Everest, “I am compelled to admit that it all seems impregnated with a perfume that may be very agreeable in a small way, but too strong a dose of it is rather irritating to the nerves.”

“The odour,” said Holbeck, “is one of the peculiarities of Bombay. I once read a very interesting memoir on the subject, presented to the Royal Society by the celebrated Dr. Spencer. The town of Bombay, it seems, is entirely enveloped in a cloud of musk, owing to the pre-

sence of the thousands of musk rats that haunt its houses. The essence emitted by these little rodents is so subtle and penetrating that when the wind blows off the land sailors out at sea can by it detect that they are in the neighbourhood of Bombay. In time you get used to it, and the inhabitants hardly notice it. And now," added he, "before we go back to our hotel we will, if you please, visit the animal hospital. It is the one of the curiosities of Bombay that I am most particularly anxious to see."

"The animal hospital!" said Everest, with surprise.

"You will see," said the doctor. "I am told that it is a very curious establishment."

Holbeck gave the necessary orders to the coachman; and, leaving the bazaars, they turned along a narrow road, and soon stopped before a fine large house. Getting down from their carriage, the doctor and his friends entered a large courtyard, and, although prepared for the spectacle, they uttered an unanimous exclamation of surprise. It seemed like a page from that charming book where Granville makes the animals take the place of men.

The courtyard was a regular hospital courtyard with its invalids; but the invalids represented every type of the animal kingdom. There were bullocks, horses, donkeys—some with bandaged eyes, some maimed, some crippled, moving about in groups, or lying at ease on litters of clean straw. A little farther off an enclosure was reserved for the bipeds. Old crows, the authors of many a crime, here peaceably ended their exis-

tence in this paradise of beasts in company with bald-headed vultures and featherless buzzards. On one side a heron, proud of its wooden leg, was enthroned in the midst of a group of blind ducks and limping fowls. Rats familiarly ran about amongst the crowd and on it the servants lavished every care, dressing the sick, and feeding the blind and the paralytic.

Barbarou could not help exclaiming,—

“Would it not be better to kill off all these miserable creatures?”

One of the superintendents of the hospital, hearing the words, turned towards the visitors, and said to them, with a smile,—

“Is that the way, gentlemen, that you treat your sick in your own country?”

Barbarou knew not what to reply; but Holbeck, after replying to the superintendent, said to his companions as they retired,—

“What seems so ridiculous to you seems to me truly admirable. This institution is a witness to the gentleness of the people. Their charity will let nothing that has been created by the hand of God suffer without consolation. Do you think that the man who shows himself so kind towards the humblest creature does not in his heart possess the treasure of love for his kindred? I know that at the bottom of these practices are the superstitions of metempsychosis; but, indeed, we, enlightened and civilized, show less elevated sentiments when we pitilessly hand over to torture the beings that the Creator has been pleased to give us as companions on this planet. The man who recognizes the services that animals render



him should show himself more just and generous."

"Well spoken, doctor!" said Everest. "You ought to be an honorary member of the Animals' Protection Society."

"You are making fun of my enthusiasm," said Holbeck good-humouredly.

"No," said Everest—"indeed no. But it is noon, and I am getting hungry."

"Again!" exclaimed the doctor. "Well, let us return to the haunt of the sharks."





“ Victory, my friends ! Fate has spoken ! ”

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MAHARAJAH'S INVITATION.

HOLBECK set to work in earnest on the day after that thus devoted to sightseeing. He was as anxious as Everest to get away into his beloved forests. Distinguished naturalist as the doctor was, he was none the less an able man of business, and in a few days he had, with the help of Barbarou, done the round of the Bombay bazaars, and made himself acquainted with the state of the market. He soon discovered that he was the first representative of a continental firm to make his purchases direct on the spot. Hitherto the native merchants had only dealt with Europe through the English houses. By dispensing with this intermediate stage Holbeck found so great a reduction in the prime cost of the articles he was in search of, that he was able to make very favourable terms for his people, and secure a good

commission for himself. In a short time he had collected all that Bombay possessed in the way of parrot-skins, parrakeets, mango-bird tails, sun-birds, peacock plumes, &c.; and by treating direct for their freight home with a French captain bound for Havre a further excellent bargain was effected.

Everest on his part did not remain inactive; while his friends were getting on with their business, he was engaged in preparing for the forthcoming expedition into the interior. These preparations were numerous and somewhat embarrassing, for on them depended the whole success of the journey. Once the travellers were well away from the coast, they would no longer be able to reckon on hotels, nor on the means of transport, nor on regular supplies. They were thus obliged not only to carry tents, but to take with them all the furniture and utensils for a lengthened sojourn in the jungle. Besides this there were the provisions and wines and other necessities, to say nothing about the battery and the ammunition, of which the young Englishman expected to make good use.

Barbarou decided for a long-range rifle, with which he hoped to do much destruction with explosive bullets. Everest selected two handy guns of eight and twelve calibre to carry conical ball, these being the best weapons for jungle work; with them he took a duck-gun and a small-bore Lefauchaux. As for Holbeck, nothing could persuade him to abandon his peaceful crossbow; he even declined to carry revolvers like his companions, under the pretext that savages are less to be feared than civilized men.

These preparations having been made, Everest set himself to work out the route. He procured the best books on India, and with the help of large scale maps endeavoured to acquaint himself with the most interesting regions from a hunting point of view. He was embarrassed at the choice which the huge territory offered him; from Cape Comorin to Thibet each district had its varied attractions. At the outset he dismissed the Himalayas and Mysore as being too distant, and decided for Central India. But here again he had to choose. Should he and his companions make their way towards Rajputana, where the travellers' tales of the mighty battues of the rajahs made his eyes glisten; or should they go to the Deccan, where the plains teemed with antelopes and wild beasts of a hundred species; or towards the mysterious Gondvana, with its valleys and mountain chains covered with impenetrable virgin forest? Before the picture built up of these wonders by so many intrepid explorers the young man knew not how to decide.

In addition to this he pursued his studies with passionate ardour, and Holbeck saw with pleased surprise that his young companion's attacks of melancholy became rarer and rarer. Absorbed in his researches, Everest did not even notice that three weeks had elapsed since his arrival at Bombay.

At last there came a day when the doctor, entering the hotel with Barbarou at breakfast time, exclaimed, as he brandished his umbrella,—

“It is all over! The last case has gone on board the ship this morning. Henceforth

my commercial duties are at an end, and I am free to return to my muttons, that is to say, to my beloved ants. Come, friend Everest, it is time to get on the road."

The young lord was at the moment seated under the verandah. On a table before him was a pile of books and unfolded maps.



"I am glad to hear that news," said he to the doctor. "All is ready; we can start to-morrow. The only thing to decide is, where we are to go to."

"What!" said the doctor; "you so impetuous and not yet come to a decision? You know, of course, that I have nothing to say about it, for we left it entirely to you. It is for you to settle the question."

"I know," said the young man; "but there are so many things to tempt me; all these countries are so promising."

"Well," said Barbarou, "there is a very simple way of getting out of the difficulty. Write the name of each country on a piece of paper; we can put the pieces in a hat, and the first name we fish out will be that of the happy place we will honour with our visit."

"That is an idea," said Everest, quite relieved at the suggestion. "I must have another look at Walker's map, and then we will draw lots. Although fate has never been favourable to me, I am curious to see how it will decide."

At this moment the gong sounded. Adjourning the consultation on fate till another op-

portunity, the three friends went in to breakfast.

The conversation continued at table.

"If you take my advice," said the doctor, "we will do a little cheating, and only put in the hat the names of the mountainous districts. I do not care much for plains; they are monotonous, while in tropical regions the mountains are particularly favoured, for, thanks to their different altitudes, they bear on their flanks or in their valleys a most varied fauna and flora."

"Well," said Everest, "we will give the preference to the mountainous districts. Everything is ready for us to go. According to friend Holbeck's instructions, I reviewed the fourteen servants he has so judiciously engaged, and I have sent them on with the tents and heavy baggage. They are now waiting for us in the island of Karanja, on the side opposite to Bombay harbour. In this way we shall avoid the railway, and plunge at once into the wilds. From the information I have picked up, I find that by some strange contrast the island and part of the neighbouring coast are, notwithstanding their proximity to Bombay, almost unknown lands, or at least in a savage state. And so we shall pass at one bound from civilization into barbarism."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Holbeck; "your plan is perfection; you have designed it as if you were an accomplished traveller."

Breakfast being over, the three friends went back to the verandah to settle the question under consideration. But just as they were preparing to decide it by lot, they were interrupted by the

arrival of a postman with letters and newspapers.

Holbeck begged to be allowed to look through his letters, as among them he expected to find the advice of the shipment of his goods, and while he did so Everest mechanically unfolded one of the papers and carelessly ran his eye over it.

The Bombay leader of the *Times of India* had no interest for him; he passed to the news of the day, but the gossip of the presidency, the fashionable movements of the governor and court, and the other items of equal importance, failed to arouse him. He threw the journal on to the table.

Holbeck was deep in his correspondence; Barbarou was stretched at full length in a large arm-chair, sleeping peacefully and smoking his inseparable pipe.

Everest felt impatient. He took up the paper again and carelessly scanned its advertisement sheet. Suddenly his eyes sparkled, his attention was at once awakened, and he fixed on one of the columns of the newspaper and began to read it with strange intensity. Then, having finished reading, he rose to his feet, and exclaimed, as he flourished the newspaper,—

“Victory, my friends! Fate has spoken!”

“What’s that?” said Barbarou, suddenly woke up from his siesta.

“Here is a magnificent and unhoped-for opportunity, which ought to realize all our dreams!” answered Everest excitedly.



“Hallo, friend! I never saw you like that before,” said Holbeck, looking at the young man over his gold spectacles. “What have you found so astonishing in the advertisements of that outlandish paper?”

“Listen!” said Everest, and he set himself to read the following:—

“TO THE SPORTSMEN OF INDIA.

“His Highness the Maharajah Goulab Sing, Sovereign of Mahavellipore, in Gondvana, appeals to the heroic courage of the European sportsmen of India. These noblemen and gentlemen are hereby informed that a year ago the anger of the terrible Siva let loose a fearful scourge against the territories of his Highness. A tiger, a monster such as men have never before seen, and which the fury of a Deva could alone bring forth, is desolating the fertile lands over which his Highness extends his paternal sway. Not content with sowing carnage amongst the innumerable flocks of his people, he spreads terror among his subjects, carries off children, women, and old men, and his growls are heard up to the very walls of his capital. In vain traps have been set by the cleverest men, in vain the best shikaris have endeavoured to take his life by sword or bullet; the son of a demon has broken the snares, and fed upon the shikaris.

“It is for this reason, O generous and magnanimous hearts, that his Highness has resolved to implore assistance. He knows that you are not like other men, and that monsters tremble before your eyes of steel. With a firm foot you



traverse the thickest jungle in the night, and your hands will hurl death at the redoubtable monster as surely as the divine Indra annihilated with his thunderbolts the rebel Kchatryas. At the sound alone of your approach the King-of-the-Tigers will flee to the mountains, but your implacable vengeance will know how to pursue and exterminate him.

“Come, then, as protectors and rescuers. His Highness’s palace and gardens will serve for your dwelling-place, his dancers and jesters will charm your hours of rest, and his Highness himself, by the splendour of his festivities, will prepare you for the heroic strife. May all come for pain and reap pleasure! But he who gains the triumph and brings in to the palace the skin and claws and teeth of the King of the Tigers, shall become the brother of his Highness; the women and the old men shall crown him with flowers; and of the royal will he shall be elevated to the dignity of Sirdar Bahadour of the kingdom. Or, should he prefer wealth to honours, he shall receive from the treasury—

#### ONE LAKH OF RUPEES.

“Those who respond to this appeal should reach my capital on or before the first day of Sawan, or of the month of August, in this year.

“Done at my palace at Mahavellipore, the 1st of Jeth (June), 1882.

“GOUJAB SING.”

“Now,” exclaimed Everest, when he had finished reading this pompous invitation, “was

I not right? Isn't this an unhoped-for and magnificent opportunity?"

"Then," said Holbeck, very quietly, "you think of becoming a competitor?"

"Why, certainly," said the young Englishman. "I will rid the Maharajah Goulab Sing of his enemy, or I will lose my life. Have you any objection?"

"Most decidedly I object," said the doctor. "You will get your bones crunched by a tiger for the sake of a fellow that I never heard of. However, if you promise to be careful and wide awake, and not to foolishly get in death's way in the adventure, I am quite agreeable to share with you in this fatuous nabob's hospitality."

"I will promise what you please, Holbeck," said the young man. "I will be careful, I assure you, and I will engage in no enterprise without consulting you."

"Well, then, let us accept the maharajah's invitation," answered the doctor. "Once I know your intentions, I am not unwilling to serve my apprenticeship to India under such noble auspices."

"Be easy, Holbeck! be easy!" said Barbarou. "We will kill the fellow's terrible tiger for him. He must be very much afraid of the beast, and he must have a respectable number of millions to offer to fill a lake with rupees."

"Oh!" exclaimed Everest, with a laugh, "it is not a lake, a sheet of water, that he mentions, my dear Barbarou, but a lakh of rupees. Since I came here I have amassed enough Hindustani to know that a lakh means a hundred thousand.

The rupee is worth about two shillings, perhaps rather less, and the lakh is thus worth something under ten thousand pounds."

"Phew! only ten thousand pounds!" said the sailor disdainfully. "I expected it was better than that. However, we can make it do."

"Barbarou!" said Holbeck ironically, "did you ever hear of the proverb, 'You should not sell the—?'"

"I know, I know," laughed Barbarou. "But we have got a good chance."

Everest had feverishly betaken himself to his maps. He was searching for the capital of the famous maharajah.

"Here is Mahavellipore!" he suddenly exclaimed, putting his finger on the spot on the map. "It is among the mountains of Mahadeo, on the south of the Nirbada river. The itinerary I worked up from Captain Forsyth's book goes right through it. As far as I recollect, it is the centre of a wonderful district. There will be a rich harvest for all of us."

"How long will it take us to reach it?" asked Holbeck.

"If we hurry," said Everest, "I should say in a little more than three weeks; but as the meeting is fixed for the 1st of August, we have nearly six weeks to do it in—double what we want."

"All the better," said the doctor. "For my part, I do not care for travelling post-haste. Let us take it easy along the road, and that will allow you to get your hand in as a tiger-slayer, for we must not introduce you to Mahavellipore as a

novice. And let us be off to-morrow. I will call at our bankers and arrange the details of our budget, and then I am ready."

The rest of the day was devoted to the final preparations. While Holbeck was arranging for the expenses, the sinews of war, Everest and Barbarou called at the gun-maker's and completed their arsenal of weapons and projectiles.

The young Englishman could hardly contain himself for joy; for a moment he, the taciturn and splenetic invalid, had even embraced Barbarou! When in the evening they had finished their meal, which they had had served in their room, he had risen, glass in hand, and in a voice of enthusiasm had exclaimed,—

"My good friends, let us drink to the health of Goulab Sing, and to the death of the King of the Tigers!"





Each on his Lascar, the group marched off to the shore.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FIRST DAY IN THE JUNGLE.

THE day had just begun to dawn when the three travellers left their hotel. Crossing the huge esplanade surrounding the fort quarter, which bears the name of The Maidan, they struck off for the harbour.

The expedition had started, and, as the doctor poetically observed, "Turning their backs on civilization, they were now to attack the formidable mysteries of unconquerable nature." Each was in full travelling costume. Everest, with a broad puggree on his light felt helmet, wore a gray sporting suit; at his belt the polished butt of a revolver was the sole reminder that henceforth the noble lord was to be a hunter among the jungles. Hol-

And now the harbour appeared in all its beauty, with its magnificent sweep of rippling water, so enormous that all the fleets of the world could here hold rendezvous, and all the hundreds of ships ranged alongside the wharves seemed lost in the immensity.

With a rapid leap the superb Sourya, the divine sun of India, had risen in the implacable azure, revealing with its dazzling light every detail of the superb panorama. On one side the island of Bombay, flat and lengthy like an alligator, with the head formed by the long promontory of Colaba, while the rocks of Mazagon serve for the neck, and the tail is lost in the infectious marshes of Salsette. Then on the opposite bank the sharp outlines of the sacred islands, Trombay, a pyramid of bare rock; Elephanta, whose flanks are pierced with temples and vaults innumerable; Karanja, with the two ridges that so nearly resemble a crouching Bactrian camel; and beyond, the huge steps, one over the other, which form the base of the mainland. On one side life, movement, noise, the long line of palaces and hotels; on the other that awe-inspiring silence and repose such as nature ever wears in the tropics.

The bunder-boat, having passed beyond the anchorage, was now in the centre of the panorama, and the travellers greedily contemplated its details.

"What a magnificent view!" said Holbeck, with emotion. "It is alone worth the voyage."

"Yes," said Everest gravely "it is beautiful."

"Say rather it is sublime!" exclaimed Barbarou.

"I never saw anything more magnificent in the world."

"After Marseilles, be it understood," added the doctor, never losing a chance of teasing his companion.

But Barbarou contented himself with shrugging his shoulders and making no reply to his adversary. Why trouble the charm of this delightful morning by a discussion which could only end in the usual manner.

"It was a lucky chance, all the same, my lord," said he to the young Englishman, "that led you to meet me. If it had not been for me you would not have been here."

"That is true," said the young man, "and I am sincerely grateful to you."

"There was not much in it after all," said Holbeck, "and I do not see why Barbarou should be so proud of the adventure. If nature had not endowed him with that carrotty fleece, it is probable that you would not have noticed him more than anybody else."

"That is it; now make fun of my face," said the sailor good-humouredly. "Know you that I am proud of the red beard that my ancestors gave me with their name, and that I have met not a few people who have considered me very good-looking."

"Oh, indeed," said Everest, who was thinking of something quite different. But the phlegmatic interruption of the Englishman was so comical that both his companions burst into a roar of laughter.

Barbarou, above all, laughed so heartily that he

ran some risk of suffocation, and this made him pass from a lively red to violet, a colour which refused to disappear until the doctor had made his patient swallow a mouthful of brandy, and accompanied it with several vigorous slaps on the back.

Running before the breeze, the boat rapidly neared Karanja, the shore of which was now visible, bordered with a thick curtain of palms. In a little while they would have reached it, when suddenly the boat with a dull noise glided on to the sand, and stopped dead.

Holbeck sprang out of the cabin, but was quickly convinced that the shipwreck was of little importance, for across the limpid shallow water he could see the soft sandy bottom stretching away to join the beach. The crew seemed to be in no way affected by the accident.

One of the men, the captain probably, came up to the doctor and said,—

“We have arrived; the sahibs can now land.”

Holbeck could hardly help making a grimace, while Barbarou gave vent to a rather unparliamentary exclamation at the idea of having to wet his magnificent boots.

“Well, let us land,” said Everest; “we shall have a footbath.”

“Footbath!” said the doctor. “It is all very well for you, who will only have the water up to your belt, but it will come up to my chin.”

But already the Lascars, after divesting themselves of their long robes of striped cotton, had jumped into the water, and were holding out their arms to the travellers with “Come along, sirs.”



Before the doctor could make out what was going to happen, he felt himself lifted up by two strong arms and seated pickaback on the shoulders of one of the Lascars. Then he understood the captain's kind invitation.

An instant afterwards Barbarou and Everest found themselves in a similar position, each on his Lascar, and the group marched off to the shore.

Taking advantage of his position, Holbeck had opened his umbrella as a protection against the rays of the sun, but this simple action set his companions laughing. On his part he could not restrain his hilarity at the sight of the grotesque figure of Barbarou, who looked like a brigand mounted on a monkey.

In this way, without accident and with dry feet, they reached the strip of fine sand which bordered the bank. The cocoanut-trees came down even to the water, and held their huge fans aloft at over a hundred feet in the air.

"Well, friend Everest," said Holbeck, "it seems to me that this is rather better than our arrival the other day. It is more like our ideal dream. Borne on slaves of bronze, we set foot on the enchanted soil of old India beneath the shadow of the palms that nod their heads in the balmy breeze."

He jumped lightly to the ground, as did his two companions.

Three turbaned men were waiting for them, and bowed respectfully before them as they approached.

"Sahibs," said one of them, "we were informed yesterday of your intended arrival. According to Latchman's instructions all has been prepared."

"Who are these unknown noblemen?" asked Barbarou, in a low voice.

"These unknown noblemen are the servants I engaged the other day," said Holbeck. "I know them, notwithstanding their black phizzes, which make one so much like the other."

"I sent them on here," said Everest, "with all our camp."

"Our camp?" said Barbarou, astonished.

"Look!" said the Englishman, and with his hand he showed him through the trees the roofs and walls of two capital tents, pitched in the middle of a clearing.

Around them the black servants were busily moving. The kitchen, installed at the foot of a tree, seemed in full activity, and the light-blue smoke of the fire floated slowly upwards in long spirals through the foliage.

Barbarou's admiration knew no bounds when, as he neared the spot, he saw, placed in the shadow of a huge mango-tree, a table, elegantly spread, awaiting the new arrivals.

"It is really superb!" he exclaimed.

"My compliments, Everest," said Holbeck, in his turn; "you are a model manager, and I think I had better hand you over my powers as mess president."

"Not at all," said the young lord modestly. "Latchman ordered all this; you should compliment him, not me."

"And what a splendid dining-room!" said the doctor. "Our Jardin des Plantes would be glad to have in its conservatories half the vegetable wonders which surround us."





A buffalo lay dead on the ground.

At this moment Latchman, in the most correct of costumes, came towards them, and said, with much solemnity, "Breakfast is served."

"Glad to hear it," said Holbeck, seating himself, "for this capital breeze has considerably sharpened my appetite."

"It is quite a fairy scene!" said Barbarou. "This is what I call travelling!"

It being his first appearance, the cook that Holbeck had engaged had done his best to distinguish himself, and the breakfast, declared excellent at all points, was rapidly despatched.

Having satisfied their appetites, the travellers strolled off to the neighbouring village, so as to have a look at the natives. Barbarou took his gun with him.

They plunged into the wood which stretched thickly along the shore. The giant trees, with their gnarled trunks and thick interlacing branches, were bound together with elegant garlands of creepers covered with many-coloured flowers. Noisy parakeets, birds with golden or emerald wings, were flying about in goodly numbers, and the sailor shot a few.

As they approached the edge of the wood there suddenly rose a chorus of hoarse guttural cries.

The hunters increased their pace, and soon found themselves before a strange, repulsive spectacle.

A buffalo lay dead on the ground, and his lacerated carcass was disappearing among a group of hungry vultures, who were greedily quarrelling over their prey. The enormous birds, with their bald heads, marabout collars, and black mantles,

were not the only guests at the disgusting banquet. Around them pressed a crowd of buzzards, kites, and other accipitrine birds endeavouring to join in the feast and profit by the stupidity of the first conquerors to secure a few pickings. And, as a strange contrast, there was formed around the carnivores another circle of hundreds of golden-collared turtle-doves.

The travellers were silently contemplating the strange scene, when Barbarou, with his usual impetuosity, broke the charm and fired both barrels of his gun into the crowd. Immediately turtle-doves and accipitrines rose like a cloud; only the stupid vultures remained, as if petrified at this unexpected attack. But as they saw the hunters appear they decided to fly, and, beating the air with their heavy wings, slowly rose, describing huge circles as they did so. Two of their number, fallen victims to Barbarou, remained by the carcass.

Holbeck, without waiting for the departure of the birds of prey, hurriedly stooped and carefully examined the ground.

"The presence of those turtle-doves puzzled me," said he, as he rose, "but now I understand. While the accipitrine birds were devouring the buffalo, the gentle birds of Venus were feeding on the ants which covered the ground, and which were themselves attracted by the carcass. It is the first time I have seen this ant, but I recognize it all right; it is the warlike or ferocious *atta*—*Atta ferox* of Burke. This insignificant insect, although but a few millimetres long, has mandibles by the side of which the jaws of the tiger are but playthings.

I intend to make a special study of this curious branch of the formicary tribe. Taking Lubbock as a guide, I make out that one of these insects could carry fifty times his own weight between his teeth. At that rate a tiger could carry an elephant in his jaws. The prodigious strength of the *Atta ferox* gives him quite a providential part to play in this country, and permits him to tear enormous carcasses to pieces with a speed that is simply marvellous. Without the help of a single bird a tribe of these ants would in a couple of days transform that carcass into a mass of bones as white and clean as ivory."

"I see over there the first houses in the village," interrupted Barbarou, who always rather dreaded these lessons on ants with which his old friend favoured him.

"It seems to me that they are coming out to us," said Everest.

In fact, as they continued their walk, they met a dozen half-naked natives, who gave them the usual majestic Indian salute, which seems to be at the same time a prayer and a benediction. At their head was an old man, who introduced himself as the headman or chief of the village.

Everest had not as yet learnt to speak very much Hindustani, but he knew enough to understand and explain to his friends that the headman invited them to refresh themselves in his house.

"I am curious to see what wine the old fellow will give us," said Barbarou.

"Wine?" said Holbeck. "Why did you not ask if there was a bar at Karanja?"

"Ah!" said the sailor, "I once had a queer

adventure on the coast of Africa, which made me rather suspicious of these invitations. An old gentleman asked us in, a few sailors and myself, and gave us a drink of a sort of liquor that was sweet and strong at the same time, and which we did not think half bad; but when we asked him how he made it, he told us that it was tafia in which he had mixed an infusion of cockroaches. We were ill for two days afterwards."

"You were very difficult to please," said Holbeck. "Perhaps the cockroaches were very good, for I remember when we were aboard the *Hougly* that the black stokers used to crunch them and enjoy them."

They had arrived in front of the old man's house, a modest mud hut, clean, almost elegant, like all Hindoo dwellings—hidden amid a thick clump of cocoanut-trees.

At a sign from the old man a half-naked lad ran towards a cocoanut-tree, and, fixing round his loins a very loose leather belt, scaled the giant trunk with monkey-like rapidity. Then, when he had reached the summit, he sent to the ground a shower of plump, green nuts.

Seizing a hatchet, the old man cut off the top of one of the nuts at a blow, and offered to Holbeck the natural cup, full of fresh and perfumed liquor. Everest came next, and then came Barbarou, who, quite reassured this time, followed the example of his friends and drank a draught of the delicious beverage.

Having taken leave of the headman of the village, the travellers continued their walk through the woods, and only regained their tents a little before



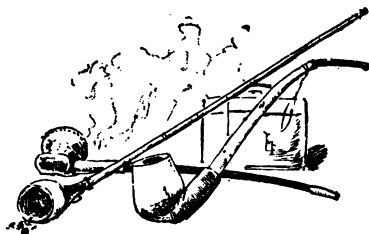
sundown. After dinner, which was a worthy pendant to the morning's repast, they made themselves comfortable in the bamboo armchairs which Latchman had had placed on the beach.

John brought the pipes and coffee, and very soon the three friends were deep in the delights of this first evening in the jungle beneath the starlit sky of India.

The cool and gentle breeze, loaded with the penetrating perfumes of the forest, softly stirred the summits of the huge palm-trees. At their feet the sea came stealing in, its phosphorescent ripples covering the sand like a carpet. Afar a few jackals were giving their plaintive cry, so strangely poetical in its melancholy.

"Well, Everest," said Holbeck, "do you not think that they know how to live here far better than they do in your gilded saloons, and that the desert shore is worth more than the terraces of Tortoni?"

But the young lord made no reply. The melancholy charm of the night filled his heart with a vague sadness, and once again his mind was wrapped in gloomy thoughts of a mysterious future.





The buffalo rushed at him.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE DOCTOR'S UMBRELLA.

THE island of Karanja is separated from the mainland by a narrow channel of little depth, which the travellers with their servants and baggage crossed on the following morning in small native boats. At the village of Panvel, where they first set foot on the continent, bullock-carts were in waiting to take them on to Poona. These carts are very primitive, and the bullocks which draw them are exceedingly slow. Besides, the carts were for the luggage and servants; the travellers themselves had to go on horseback.

Everest, with this in view, busied himself in Bombay in endeavouring to find three good, strong, quiet horses. When, however, he heard of his inquiries, the doctor exclaimed,—

“My dear Everest, I never in my life put my legs across one of those noble quadrupeds, and I

am not going to begin my horsemanship studies when I am fifty years old."

"How do think of travelling, then?" asked his lordship. "The roads we are going are very rough for carriages, and you could never stand the joltings."

"I will travel as I have always travelled up till now, as I did in America, as I did in Africa, on foot."

"That will never do," said Everest. "We should have to make such short stages. The villages are few in the interior of India, and at long intervals apart."

"Well, then," answered the doctor, "I beg you will get me a donkey. If I fall then I shall not have to fall very far."

Everest, however, was unable to gratify the doctor's desire, as the donkeys of the country were very poor and miserable-looking animals, so that Holbeck had to content himself with a compromise between a donkey and a horse—in other words, a mule.



The mule was a very fine one, and looked so clean beneath its gay red trappings, allowed itself to be so quietly straddled, and started at such an agreeable little trot, that the doctor, as they went out of Panvel, felt himself quite reconciled to horsemanship, and proudly rode along between Everest and Barbarou, who were each mounted on a superb Arab. The young lord, like nearly every English gentleman, was a consum-

mate horseman, and thoroughly good across country. Barbarou had a regular sailor's seat, his riding-lessons having been taken on the miserable hacks that Jack ashore takes such delight in.

Following the plan drawn up by the Englishman, the travellers made their way towards the Ghauts in short stages.

This part of Konkan is very picturesque, and merits more attention than it generally gets from the carriage windows of the express. It is an old sea-beach, about ninety miles across, which the sea has left as it retired from the cliffs of the hills that now skirt the coast; but on the rich deep soil of the plain rise the outlying masses of Matheran and Bahou Malim with their precipitous flanks and thickly wooded summits. Although on these plateaux the air is pure and bracing, the country generally is marshy and insalubrious. It is for this reason that, in spite of its proximity to Bombay, a large part of it has up to now been abandoned to the natives and the wild beasts. Tigers, thanks to European sportsmen, are very rare, but leopards and panthers, to say nothing of the less respectable *felidæ*, still haunt its more woody retreats.

Our friends, however, did not meet with any, and were in consequence rather disappointed. Barbarou, with gun in hand, made frequent plunges into the jungle, but had to devote himself to the birds, and as he was an excellent shot he made a tolerably heavy bag.

Holbeck, from the very outset, was in a most enthusiastic state of mind. Everywhere, on the

trees, under the leaves, in the fissures of the rocks, among the shingle on the sand, there were innumerable legions of his beloved ants—red, black, gray, blue, green, bronzed, giant and pigmy, busy and fierce, savage and civilized. During the daily halts he remained for hours watching the proceedings of these marvellous insects. He studied their habits and their laws; he dug into the depths of their subterranean cities, and went into ecstasies before their prodigious architecture. In the evening, by the light of an Argand lamp, he sat over his microscope and dissected the specimens he had taken during the day, studied their internal structure, and classed them into types and varieties. It seemed to him that chance had permitted him to discover the very ant-paradise, and he cared not to go farther. What was India to him, with all its splendours, all its ancient civilization? Ants were what he wanted, and the ground, sandy or rocky, furnished them in abundance. He had begged his companions to allow him to thoroughly explore the district, and instead of reaching the Ghauts in two or three days a week had passed since their departure from Panvel, and they had not got half way.

But if the two naturalists found enough to keep them occupied in this country, it was not the same with Everest. After going into raptures in all good faith for one or two days over the wonderful ants of Holbeck and the beautiful birds of Barbarou, he felt himself again falling a victim to his unconquerable spleen. His was not one of those minds which are satisfied with the

sublimity of virgin nature. Had he dared to tell the truth, he would have confessed that a fine English park, properly laid out, seemed to him much better than this savage jungle, crowded with creepers and thorns, where behind under-wood there was nothing to be seen—not even the tail of a miserable tiger.

The spleen—that horrible spleen—was again closing on its prey. The young man forgot all the fevered dreams of Bombay. The announcement of the Maharajah of Mahavellipore appeared to him but a mystification, and he began to think that his companions were making sport of him, and taking him with them in a journey without charm, and, above all, without danger.

One evening Holbeck, returning from an entomological excursion, found Everest stretched on an armchair at the door of the tent, plunged in a profound state of torpor. Scared at what he saw, he ran up to him, and asked, “Are you ill, my dear friend?”

“Would to heaven I were!” answered the young man, “for then I would soon be free from the burden that crushes me, and would relieve you of my fastidious society.”

“What is all this?” said Holbeck, with well-meaning indignation. “How about your promise, my lord?”

“I feel it is beyond my strength. I thank you for your sympathy, but your generous efforts are in vain; my malady is incurable. Leave me to my fate.”

“I leave you!” exclaimed the doctor. “Never! I would rather abandon my dearly beloved ants.

All we have to do is to resume our treatment, and to begin with I prescribe for you to take to-night, before you retire, a glass of Schiedam, very hot, and with little sugar. You know that is my sovereign remedy."

"I will obey you, doctor," said Everest, who could not refrain from smiling.

This was all that Holbeck said at the time, but when he had gone into the tent which constituted his bedroom, and had brought out from his pockets the numberless little tin boxes in which he kept his ants, he struck his hand against his forehead and exclaimed, "Stupid fool that I am! As if I could not have seen that while I was deep in my ant-hills this poor lad was fretting with weariness! We must get on. If he throws the journey up in disgust, he is a lost man. We must leave here, and try to bring this poor sick soul to more exciting scenes. A few hard knocks will cure him. If we could only reach the famous rajah! I will call Latchman to the rescue."

He gave a slight tap on the gong on the table.

A moment afterwards the khitmatgar appeared. "May the doctor excuse me," said he, "it is not my fault that the dinner is late. The bawarchi had to go six miles away from here to find one skinny fowl."

"It is not about the dinner nor the fowl, fat or skinny, that I wish to see you," said the doctor—"I want a tiger."

"A tiger!" exclaimed Latchman.

"Yes, a tiger—a really good tiger, the most

active tiger you can get—for my lord Everest to kill.”

“But, sir—” murmured the servant.

“There is no ‘sir’ about it,” said Holbeck. “You told me the other day that you were an accomplished shikari; now a shikari is a man who provides people with tigers. Get me a tiger, or I dismiss you!”

“The thing is impossible at this moment,” said Latchman, in a suppliant tone; “but if the doctor will be satisfied with a nice panther, I can promise one as soon as we get to Khandalla.”

“Very well,” said the doctor, with much condescension, “this time I will be satisfied with a panther; but it must be a real panther, strong and ferocious; none of your wild cats.”

“You shall have no cause for complaint, sir,” said Latchman.

Shortly afterwards, as the doctor sat down to table, he said to his companions, “Gentlemen, I have some news which I am sure will interest you. You know with what ardour I have, during the last few days, devoted myself to the study of the habits of the warlike atta—”

“As if we didn’t!” interrupted Barbarou, stifling a yawn. “You never speak unless it is about it.”

“Well,” continued Holbeck, paying no attention to this somewhat uncourteous interruption, “I have attained the desired result. The warlike atta is now properly classed, and, as nothing keeps us here, we start to-morrow morning in forced marches on Khandalla, which is only fifteen miles ahead.”



"Have they, then, telegraphed some still more peculiar ant?" said Barbarou the pitiless.

"No," said the doctor; "but Latchman has received intelligence of a panther infesting the neighbourhood of the village, and I thought, as a beginning for our future career as tiger-slayers, we might relieve the earth of the monster's presence."

"Bravo!" said Barbarou; "that is something like! A panther is not much, you know, but still it is something."

"Don't be mistaken," said Everest, whom the news had woke up a little; "the leopard or large panther of India is not a bad sort of fellow. A good many sportsmen rate him above the tiger; for while the tiger will run when slightly wounded, the leopard, on the contrary, never hesitates to charge, and keeps up the pursuit in fine style."

"Oh, dear!" said Holbeck; "then we had better think about it. I hope neither of you are going to miss him."

"Oh, be easy!" said Barbarou; "I have an idea. Let Everest fire first, and then if the beast stirs I'll—pung, pung! and I assure you he won't want any more."

At dawn the next morning the camp was struck, and, leaving the servants to come on afterwards, the horsemen set out, accompanied by Latchman.

Two hours afterwards they reached Kampulli, a small village at the very base of the famous Bhore defile, one of the principal passes leading from the coast plain to the table-land of the Deccan.

Everest knit his brows as he suddenly heard

the whistle of a locomotive which was descending the mountain, dragging—or rather holding back—a train of travellers.

“Do not be uneasy at this meeting,” said Holbeck; “the railway was not made for us.”

A moment afterwards they had begun the ascent of the mountain, and were on that admirable road which winds among the precipices whose sublime beauty railway travellers can hardly appreciate. As they ascended, the vegetation became more verdant, and their lungs drank in the cooler air. Each minute the panorama changed, and drew from them continual exclamations of enthusiasm. Now they beheld some gloomy gorge, quite filled with trees, an admirable haunt for tigers, where man perhaps had never penetrated; now they were among the rocks, bare, precipitous, and jagged; and then, as they emerged from them, the plain would unroll itself at their feet like a gigantic map, with its watercourses, forests, and villages clearly portrayed, and afar off the long glittering line of the Indian Ocean, indented by the gentle profile of the little archipelago of Bombay.

The sun was already high on the horizon when they reached the bungalow, or travellers' house, at Khandalla. Their people and tents not having arrived, they were very glad to find this hospitable resting-place.

The bungalow is one of the few that have survived the establishment of the railway in the Bhore Ghaut, and it owes its survival to its admirable position. Situated on the extreme edge of the plateau, it towers above a deep ravine, whose pointed precipices lose themselves in the dense



As they ascended, the vegetation became more verdant.



forest. On one side rises a huge mountain, which vaguely recalls the profile of the Duke of Wellington, and hence bears the title of the Duke's Nose, and on the other a grand cascade leaps from a height of over 600 feet into the valley.

After a very comfortable breakfast, prepared for them by the cook of the bungalow, the three travellers walked to the edge of the precipice to admire the panorama. The atmosphere was of such limpidity that they could see the villages and trees in the plain with astonishing clearness.

Eagles and vultures were hovering at a great height above the valley, and the huge curve of their flight brought them every now and then to the foot of the rock where our friends were seated. The sight immediately tempted Everest and Barbarou to fire at the eagles from a position such as the sportsman rarely gets—namely, down on them. The first vulture that came round received a bullet from the young lord, and tumbled head over heels into the abyss.



At the report, a hundred times repeated by the echo, some buffaloes grazing on the table-land looked up uneasily. One of them, evidently the leader of the herd, sniffed noisily and swept the horizon with his big short-sighted eyes. Suddenly he saw against the sky the white flag of Holbeck's umbrella, whose owner, upright on the summit of a rock, was admiring the landscape. At once the buffalo thought he had discovered his enemy, and with his horns down charged at a trot towards him.

When Holbeck, warned by the shouts of his friends, turned to look, the animal was only a few paces off. The gallant doctor thought he was done for. Flight was impossible; on one side was the frightful precipice, on the other were the horns of the buffalo. Without a moment's hesitation he swung sharp round on his enemy, and held out as a buckler his white umbrella. The buffalo rushed at him, and a shout of terror escaped from the lips of Everest and Barbarou as they ran up to their friend's succour. Assailed and assailant had cleared the edge of the precipice; but while the buffalo leapt to destruction down the abyss, and the umbrella turned somersaults as it slowly fell, the doctor remained crouched amongst the bushes that capped the crest of the rocks.

Before his friends had reached him Holbeck arose and shouted to them,—

“All right here; but I have had a narrow escape, and I have lost my parasol!”

And with a melancholy look he followed his umbrella, which, like a parachute, had been caught by the wind, and was being majestically wafted out to sea.





“ Are you sure that it was a panther ? ”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PANTHER-SLAYER.

ON their return to the bungalow—or bangla, as we suppose we ought now to write it—the travellers found their servants employed in pitching the tents close by. The doctor in great haste searched amongst the luggage, and was fortunate enough to find a strong umbrella of blue cloth, which would replace the white one so unhappily relegated to the tender mercies of the wind.

Since his arrival at Khandalla, Latchman had been busy. Stung to the quick by the remarks of the doctor, he had immediately started off up the village to collect information.

By chance he happened to run against a shepherd of the district, from whom the panther the night before had stolen a goat.

"Are you sure that it was a panther?" asked Latchman. "There are lynxes and hyenas on the mountain, and these are quite capable of walking off with your goat."

"Ah!" said the shepherd, "I know the accursed animal too well to be deceived; he is a great, strong panther, and I once saw him as close as I see you. In three months he has taken six of my best nannies and my only billy-goat. I have kept good watch, but he is more artful than I am, and unless some charitable man comes to my help my flock will all disappear."

"And can you tell me where is the lurking-place of this terrible foe?" asked Latchman.

"During the day the beast lies hid in the gorge which borders the village of Baili; at night he prowls about the neighbourhood, carrying off the dogs and goats, and sometimes a cow that has strayed. This morning, when I found the goat gone, I followed his traces, and in the thickest part of the jungle I saw the carcass half eaten. If it pleases you to kill the accursed animal, I can show you a convenient hiding-place close to the spot where what remains of my unhappy goat has been left, and there, as is his custom, the panther will return at night to finish his feast."

"That is all I want to know," said Latchman. "I cannot look after him myself, but if you can arrange so as to show the panther to my masters, you shall be doubly recompensed, for they will assuredly rid you of your enemy, and, besides, are rich and generous sahibs, who will give you enough to buy all the goats that your panther has destroyed."



"Bring your masters, then, this evening to the village of Baili, at about two miles from here," said the shepherd. "I will wait for them, and I promise you that they shall have a shot at the panther. Near there I and my friends will devise a convenient hiding-place."

Latchman returned to the camp, delighted at the information he had obtained, and immediately went in search of the doctor.

"Sir," said he, "I have found what you wanted."

"What do you mean?" asked Holbeck, astonished at his excitement.

"I have found the panther which the sahib ordered," replied the khitmatgar.

"Oh, indeed! What, like that—all at once?"

"Yes, sahib; and I can assure you that you have never seen a panther more beautiful or more terrible."

"I am enchanted to hear it, my lad," said Holbeck. "It is really wonderful for you to find a panther like that. When is the fun to begin?"

"This evening, if you will have it so."

When the news was communicated by Holbeck to his companions, great was the enthusiasm.

"Then Latchman has found a panther for us?" said Everest. "I confess I never trusted to his promise. And when are we to start?"

"Latchman will himself tell you," said Holbeck. "I should say the best thing would be for us to go after dinner."

"Us!" said Barbarou, in a tone of surprise. "You, I suppose, don't intend to go with us?"

"And why not?" continued the doctor, looking

up. "On the contrary, I have the greatest wish to assist at such an interesting event, and I have no intention of letting you go alone."

"But, my dear doctor," said Everest, with much anxiety, "have you not told me that your short-sightedness prevents your firing a gun?"

"Well, I am going as a spectator, and not as an actor."

"Are you ignorant of the unexpected dangers attached to such expeditions?" continued his lordship.

"The dangers are the same for you as for me," said the doctor. "My presence will oblige you to be a little more prudent, because you will have to look after me. As a precaution I will take one of Barbarou's revolvers in my belt."

The matter being thus settled, the hunters set to work to prepare their weapons and ammunition; Latchman, who had often assisted in similar expeditions, giving valuable advice. As they were to fire from a cache, it was decided that they should each take two guns, and have both loaded, in case they were wanted.

After dinner the three friends mounted, and in half an hour, under the guidance of Latchman, trotted over to Baili.

The shepherd was waiting for them as they rode in. All the people of the village were collected round him with good wishes for the sahibs who had come to rid them of a dangerous neighbour.

When the doctor alighted, a score of peasants surrounded him, prostrated themselves before him, clasped his knees in their hands, and, in a

word, went through the whole of the ceremonies to gain the protection of so puissant a personage. Each one recounted the depredations of which he had been the victim on account of the panther, and declared that owing to the accursed animal he was reduced to the greatest misery.

"From all of which," said Holbeck to Latchman, who translated these supplications, "I perceive that, not content with our killing their panther, we shall have to present each of these fellows with a herd of goats. It would not take much to make them consider us morally responsible for the damage they have had to put up with from our panther."

"Niggers are always beggars," said Barbarou, "be they big or little. I knew a king on the Gaboon who, every time he met me, asked me for twopence to get some tobacco."

"They are a poor lot," added Everest.

The hunters left their horses in charge of the peasants and started off in silence, guided by the shepherd and two other natives. A little way from the village they entered the forest, which was composed of stunted trees sparsely scattered on the two sides of a narrow ravine.

In a few minutes the shepherd stopped and made a sign that they had arrived. Latchman had brought a lantern, and by its fitful light the hunters beheld the theatre of their future exploits.

What remained of the goat's half-eaten carcass was lying in a little clearing scantily covered with brushwood. The cache had been constructed up a tree about twenty yards off. It was of the ordinary Indian type, formed of a kind of wooden

sofa, whose bed consisted of a network of cord. The bed was firmly secured to the fork of a tree, and yielded a narrow platform on which three persons could take up their position with a fair amount of discomfort.

"Ah!" said Barbarou, as he examined the cache from the foot of the tree, "it seems to me that the pulpit has not got as many places as we ordered. We shall be quite crowded enough up there."

"We must squeeze in," said Everest philosophically.

"It seems to me," said Holbeck, "that we shall do just as well down here. Unless I am mistaken the cache is hardly twelve feet from the ground, and it will be quite child's play for the panther to leap that."

"If you stop down here," said Latchman, "the panther will see you immediately, for he always explores the bushes before he begins, and he can see almost as well by night as by day. Besides, as he can leap nearly twenty feet, if you wish to be quite out of his reach, you will have to get up to the top of the tree, and you will find it difficult to fire from there. What I would advise you is this: in the first place, once you are up, remain quite motionless and never move your eyes from the bait. When the panther arrives, do not fire until you are sure you can hit him, and avoid attracting his attention before your bullets have struck him. Fire one after the other, and quickly, so as not to give him time to spring."

Having thus delivered himself, Latchman invited the hunters to clamber up the tree; and

when they had done this—not without difficulty—he with the villagers walked off, saying, as he did so,—

“We will wait outside the wood, and return as soon as we hear the guns.”

The hunters heard the natives stealthily glide away, and then silence reigned. They were alone, in profound darkness, for Latchman had carefully removed the lantern. They settled themselves as comfortably as possible, Everest and Barbarou seated on the side nearest the enemy, Holbeck behind them, all with their firearms in their hands.

“To say that I am well,” said the doctor, “would be a paradox. What consoles me is that it is impossible for me to be better.”

“I,” said Barbarou, “feel like a bear up a pole, with his mouth open for the boys to throw in a bun.”

Everest said nothing. For the first time since his departure for Bombay he felt completely happy. At length he was about to meet those mysterious terrors of the jungle which made the stoutest hearts tremble. He was about to taste that keen enjoyment which so enthrals those who have once partaken of it that they can never more pass it by.

One thing rather astonished him and checked his emotion—that was the quiet coolness of the doctor, and the gay good-humour of Barbarou. These unpretending naturalists did indeed seem to be extraordinary men.

“Never mind,” said Holbeck; “that scamp of a Latchman has a way of giving you advice that makes cold shudders run down your back.”

"In other words," said Barbarou, "it would not have taken much to have made him ask you for your last will and testament."

The sailor accompanied this attempt at a joke with such a peal of laughter as echoed into the very depths of the forest.

"Thanks, friend," said Everest. "If you don't want to frighten the panther away from us, perhaps you will remember what Latchman said about our keeping quiet."

"You are right," said Barbarou. "Listen, I am mute as a dead man!"

The darkness of the night was deep. There was no moon, but the gloom was of perfect limpidity. The twinkling stars shot down their silver rays among the trees. In these latitudes the darkness of the night is never as complete as when the sky is cloudless.

The hunters, now grown accustomed to the obscurity, remained in silence in their uncomfortable eyrie. Nothing now troubled the calm of the forest. It was not as in the evening after sunset, or in the morning before the first streaks of dawn, when the wild beasts of the jungle give forth their cries. During the night all is still, for the carnivore tries to hide his coming from his intended victim.

The hours moved slowly on, one after the other. Already in the east a faint gleam proclaimed the approach of dawn. The hunters still were watching, and as yet nothing had moved in the wood.

Holbeck ventured to say in a low voice, "I don't know how you feel, but it seems to me we might just as well have passed the night in our

beds. For my part, I am half asleep, and once or twice have nearly tumbled off my perch."

"I shall soon begin to snore," said Barbarou, "if I can't have a pipe to keep me awake."

"Have it, then," said Everest, unable to repress a slight movement of impatience.

The sailor did not want to be told twice. He pulled out his pipe, filled it, carefully struck a light, and began to smoke. Then silence reigned again. Darkness wrapped the hiding-place, and now and then the glowing tobacco in the pipe would shoot a transient glimmer into the night.

Impatience was gaining even on the impassible Everest, when suddenly he seemed to hear an imperceptible movement on the other side of the clearing. His heart ceased to beat, and he clutched his gun with a firmer hand. But doubtless he was deceived, for anew the jungle was plunged into silence.

And now Barbarou gently touched his arm to attract his attention, and the young man, as he turned his head, distinctly saw a pair of eyes gleaming among the sombre mass of brushwood.

It was a strange, surprising thing, which would have frightened him had he been capable of fright; but it seemed to Everest as though these eyes, with their phosphorescent reflections, were fixed on his. It was probably but an optical illusion, due to the isolation of the two luminous points in the depth of the darkness. It matters not, the young lord understood the strange power that resides in the look of these terrible *felidæ*, which in the night fascinates their victims, freezes them



The panther sprang on to the tree.



discovered them, and was going to attack on the flank, where he would only be exposed to the fire of one of the hunters, Everest, who was at that corner.

It seemed to Holbeck that the animal was preparing to spring, and, forgetting all prudence, he shouted aloud,—

“Look out, Everest, on your left!”

Quick as lightning the young Englishman turned round. Aiming carefully between the points of light, he fired.

A terrific roar was the answer, and by the feeble light of the dawn now stealing over the wood Everest saw the panther gather itself together, uncurl, and leap towards him. He seized his second gun and fired, in too great a hurry, probably, for his second bullet had no effect.

The panther sprang on to the tree, and clawed up to the edge of the platform. It dug its claws into it, and shook it in every fibre.

For a moment the confusion was indescribable. Everest was powerless, and clubbing one of the guns struck the beast again and again on the snout, while Holbeck in his excitement felt for the revolver, which had slipped from his belt. Barbarou had got on to the tree, and leaning over Everest fired point blank at the panther. But either his hand was out, or the darkness deceived him, for he missed.

The panther did not let go its hold; on the contrary, despite Everest's efforts, it was getting farther on to the network. The platform was almost shaken to pieces in the struggle, and threatened every instant to drop to the ground.

And now there came a shout of joy from Holbeck, who had just found the revolver in the net. To seize it, aim it, and send the six shots into the monster's head, was the work of hardly as many seconds.

The effect was tremendous—and quite unexpected. While the panther unclasped its hold and fell to the ground, the platform also collapsed, and down with the panther went the three friends.

Somewhat shaken by this abrupt descent, and much excited at the encounter, which had, however, only lasted a few moments, they were painfully picking themselves up when Latchman and the natives arrived with torches. Hearing the reports of the guns, they had come to assist at the finish of the drama.

The panther lay on the ground, its skull shattered by the bullets of Holbeck's revolver. On examination, it appeared that Everest's first shot had merely grazed one of the hind-legs, thus preventing the animal, however, from springing right on to the platform.

"My dear Everest," said Holbeck, "you see it is to your bullet that the honour of the victory is due."

"Not at all," said the young man; "it is your revolver that settled the brute, and I am sure that without you—"

"Let us say no more about it, then," answered the doctor. "The panther shall be mine, and you can have your revenge."

"Certainly," said Everest, "and I hope that will come soon."

“You must admit that I have been very badly treated,” said Barbarou, “and I ought to have some compensation as well. There is Holbeck classed amongst the mightiest hunters of modern times.”

The country was brightening beneath the dawn when the hunters emerged from the forest, followed by the natives carrying the panther in triumph.

The shepherd had run on to announce the news to the village, and when the doctor arrived he found himself saluted by the whole population shouting and singing his praises.

Barbarou, rendered quite enthusiastic at the reception, added his acclamations to those of the populace, and yelled forth,—

“Glory to the invincible! Glory to Holbeck, the panther-slayer!”





This time it would not do to fail.

## CHAPTER XV.

### EVEREST'S REVENGE.

EVEREST had not long to wait for his revenge.

Two days afterwards, while the travellers were visiting the magnificent subterranean temples at Karli, excavated in the mountain a few miles from Khandalla, some terrified natives came up to warn them that a tiger was lurking in the neighbouring ravine. A boy in charge of some goats had seen the animal crouching among the rocks, where probably it had retired for the day. If the hunters wished to take advantage of the opportunity they would, they said, have to make haste, as at the approach of night the brute would leave its haunt.


With Latchman's assistance, Everest immediately completed his preparations. A few willing men as beaters were collected in the village, and a start was made. Under present circumstances it was impossible to devise a hiding-place. The

tiger would therefore have to be walked up to and fought with face to face.

Holbeck saw that this time he could not persuade Everest to take him with him. Not only would he risk his life uselessly, but he might compromise the fate of his companions. And so he contented himself with taking the young Englishman aside, and saying to him, with much feeling,—

“My dear lad, do be prudent, and think of your old friend. If an accident were to happen to you, I should indeed be sincerely grieved.”

Everest said nothing, but the long, cordial clasp of the hand was equivalent to a response. Then shouldering his gun he ran on to join Barbarou, who was ahead with the beaters.



In about an hour they reached the foot of the mountain. It was a range of rounded hills jutting out into the plain. The rain-storms had swept away the soil, and the bare rock, baked by the implacable sun, held here and there but a clump of cactuses, planted by chance in a few of the fissures. A narrow valley, or rather gorge—a nullah, as the natives call it—cut through the chain, and in the middle of the stony landscape showed a dark band of vegetation, dotted with detached rock masses, down which in the rainy season roared a furious torrent.

“That is where the tiger is,” said the youngster, who was showing the way, pointing with his hand towards the entrance of the ravine.

Immediately Latchman, like an experienced shikari, gave his orders to the beaters, who, armed with their long iron-shod bamboos, divided into two groups so as to surround the nullah, and begin to scale the flanks of the hill which commanded the gorge. They advanced with great caution, half stooping on the ground, and taking cover wherever possible behind the blocks of stone and the tufts of cactus.

When the last had disappeared, Latchman said to the hunters,—

“Now you must station yourselves in some convenient place. The beaters will work up to the head of the nullah, and then, when the two parties have joined hands, they will turn about and advance towards us along its bottom and sides. If what the youngster says is true, the tiger, frightened at the noise, will try to gain the bed of the stream as it winds into the plain, and to do that he must pass those rocks that you see over there. If you and my lord place yourselves one on each side of the entrance, the tiger will not be able to approach without your seeing him, and—”

“All right,” said Everest.

“I see,” said Barbarou.

Advancing with great caution, they reached a few enormous blocks that the violence of the current had swept to the entrance of the gorge, and which, piled up on each side of it in picturesque confusion, left only a single passage, about a dozen yards across.

The two hunters took up their position in this passage, one on one side, one on the other, each

with his back to the rocks. Latchman stayed near Everest, while the youngster crouched amongst the rocks close by.

Suddenly from the depths of the gorge there came a prolonged shouting, repeated a hundred times by the echo. It was the beaters, who, having effected their junction, were descending the ravine, and endeavouring by their cries to rouse the tiger. From the defile where they were posted the hunters heard the natives striking the rocks and bushes with their iron-shod bamboos, so as to add to the clamour.

Nothing moved in the ravine.

"It is certainly an old tiger!" whispered Latchman in Everest's ear; "a young one would have been off at the first shout, and tried to save himself by bounding past us here; but an old one is defiant. If he has already been shot at, he may try to force the line of the beaters, and will escape us. However, watch!"

With their rifles at their thighs, the hunters waited. The noise of the beaters approached. The men could not be more than a dozen yards from the entrance.

Suddenly, at the bottom of the path among the rocks, the tiger appeared. It came on slowly, looking somewhat dejected, with its head and tail hanging down, and seeming like an animal rather wearied at all the noise than alarmed at an imminent danger. Down among the grey rocks, its bright orange fur, striped with the bands of black and white, shone out with surprising distinctness.

Everest by a look warned Barbarou that he was

going to fire. Slowly and deliberately he raised his rifle and brought it to his shoulder. As he did so the polished barrel glittered in the sun. The tiger saw the warning, and raised its head. It perceived its enemies, and sharply drew back and contracted its lips into a sinister grin, which showed its red jaws and formidable teeth.

Everest pulled the trigger. The gun went off, filling the ravine with its report—and also, unfortunately, with its smoke. Hardly a moment elapsed when, as the light cloud dissipated itself, the Englishman rushed forward, followed by Barbarou, and found that the tiger had disappeared. The narrow passage was empty. At the same moment the redoubled cries of the beaters informed the hunters that the tiger had forced their line.

“And such a splendid tiger, too!” said Barbarou, much vexed.

“It is impossible that I could have missed him,” said Everest, in despair; “I quite covered him with the rifle, and my hand did not tremble in the least.”

“Possibly,” said Barbarou; “but the hand has to be very firm; the heart always jumps a little at such times, and it takes such a little to send a bullet wrong.”

Latchman had run down into the ravine to examine the spot, and now he shouted, “Come here and see, sahibs! The tiger is wounded! he cannot escape us!”

At this moment the beaters arrived. They were agreed in declaring that the tiger was seriously wounded, and that, by the way he leapt



as he returned through their line, he could not possibly go far.

"Only," said one of the men, "he is an old one, and it will not be easy to get at him. The best thing would be to leave him to die in peace."

"Abandon a wounded tiger!" said Everest angrily; "that would be a shame! If you will not follow him, we will go alone."

The beaters, who expected to be handsomely paid, protested their devotion, and a fresh start was made.

"Matters are getting serious," said Latchman; "for if a tiger beats a retreat when he is wounded, he never does so a second time. Crouching in the scrub, he will let us get close up to him, and then leap out on us at the first movement. It is at such times that the poor beaters are so often carried off."

"I will see that nothing happens to them," said Everest.

The guns were again loaded, and the natives, with the hunters, again started up the ravine. Armed with their long sticks, they tried each bush, accompanying their movements with insulting addresses to the tiger.

"Come out!" they said. "Do you not see that the children are laughing at you? If your wife were here, she would disown you! Now, little uncle, be good! The noble lords from Europe will make a carpet of your skin, and your claws will be hung like charms from the necks of their ladies! You are a coward!"

But neither threats nor flatteries could make the tiger show himself.

All at once the young shepherd, who was following said, "Here he is!" and ran for safety.

The panic was contagious; in the twinkling of an eye the beaters had disappeared, leaping off like goats among the bushes and stones. Even Latchman had gone.

The friends were left alone, but they could see nothing.

"The boy has good eyes," said Barbarou, "but the tiger is not far off; we must get him out. There is only one way of doing so, and that is to give him a few stones."

Stepping back from Everest, he began to pick up a few pebbles that had been rounded by the torrent, and threw them into the bushes. As he was stooping he slipped over one and fell full length on the ground. Everest had already made a movement to go to his assistance, when he was almost paralyzed with terror to see the tiger, which had been crouching under the bushes, leaping

towards Barbarou. It was only a few yards from him.

This time it would not do to fail. Instantly he aimed—fired—and the tiger gave a tremendous leap, and fell rolling by the side of Barbarou, who slowly arose.

"I say, my friend," exclaimed the sailor, "you had better let me know when you are coming next time; I thought you were firing at me."

But the gallant fellow hid his emotion under his



raillery, and his hand trembled as he clasped that of Everest.

"Ah! I would even embrace you," he said, "if it were the custom of your country to do so. You are a brave lad."

"Do it if you like," said Everest.

And without further ado Barbarou clasped him in his arms.

"Say," said he, "that it was I who thought of saving your life."

"And why, my dear Barbarou?" said Everest.

"Ah! there," said the sailor, with some embarrassment. "As you sometimes have ideas—what was I saying? You know—had I saved your life, I should say to you, 'Your life is now mine, I give it to you, strive to keep it.'"

"Dear Barbarou," said Everest, with emotion, "you are like our friend Holbeck, who hopes that one day he will make me love to live."

"And so we shall, you will see," said Barbarou emphatically.

At this moment a head stealthily appeared above one of the rocks; it belonged to Latchman, who, at a glance seeing how things stood, made haste to come down, and, without showing the least shame at his cowardice, ran to congratulate his masters on their success.

Timidly one after the other the beaters appeared, and the usual concert of praises began. They measured the tiger, which was nearly nine feet long from the point of the snout to the tip of the tail, and each, according to the invariable custom, declared that it was the biggest that had ever been killed. Then a litter was hastily con-

structed, and, placing the tiger on it, they began their triumphant march back to camp.

From afar the hunters recognized Holbeck, who, sheltered beneath his blue umbrella, was coming to meet them.

"I was not uneasy," he said, as he shook hands, "but I am very glad to see you back."

After dinner Barbarou related the events of the day to Holbeck. Once more Everest had an opportunity of recognizing the wonderful faculty for exaggeration and embellishment possessed by our worthy friend the Marseillais. Under his imaginative pencil the tiger bounded from rock to rock up to their very nose, and then, after being hit by Everest's bullet, sprang backwards at the heads of the beaters. Finally, as the climax, Barbarou, full length on the ground, felt the foetid breath of the monster on his neck, when Everest's bullet arrived to save him from a terrible death.

Thoroughly accustomed to these embellishments Holbeck succeeded in discovering what truth there was in this pathetic recital, and warmly congratulated Everest on his coolness.

"You have," he said, "all the qualities necessary for a hunter of wild beasts. You have the courage, the calmness, the coolness, and the sureness of eye. You are worthy to take your place among the numerous competitors which the generosity of the maharajah is sure to attract to Mahavellipore."

"What do I care for the offers of the maharajah?" said Everest. "It is the sport alone which attracts and fascinates me. I owe to it now the first moment of genuine happiness I have

had in my life; for it has been permitted to me—to me, the workless, the listless, and the useless—to be useful to one of my kind. I have this day felt more emotion and more pleasure than I ever experienced in all my existence. Like the divine Hercules, I could run through the country, making war on the monsters that desolate it, and if in the fray I should end by succumbing—well, my life, short as it was, would have been of some use.”

“Bravo!” exclaimed Holbeck, “that is how I like to hear you talk. I hope you will become like the famous General Bagot, and that in your old age you can retire into a house whose walls are hung with the thousands of tiger-skins that you have won.”

“Well,” asked Barbarou, “and the King of Mahavellipore? What is to become of him in all this fine talk?”

“Never fear, Barbarou,” said Everest, “we will give him his tiger-skin.”





These curious monuments.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### AN UNEXPECTED INTRUDER.

A WEEK after this memorable day Holbeck found himself installed one morning in a huge armchair at the Elphinstone Hotel at Poona.

The three travellers had the evening before arrived in the ancient capital of the Peishwas, and the doctor had asked his companions to recruit themselves a little among the comforts of civilized life before taking the final plunge into barbarism.

That is why, leaving their camp at the gates of the town, they had taken up their abode at the Elphinstone, which they had heard was a very comfortable hotel. It served them as headquarters for their further preparations, completing their ammunition and provisions, and engaging

porters and beasts of burden. Until they reached Mahavellipore there was no other town of importance.

And so Holbeck had plunged into the comforts of civilization—that is to say, he had dined at the *table-d'hôte*, he had slept in a bed longer than the one in his camp, and in the morning, as we have said, he was lolling in an armchair with his heels higher than his head, and quietly reading the newspapers after his early breakfast.

He had looked into the *Home News*, the *Examiner*, the *Bombay Gazette*, the *Mofussilite*; he had primed himself with the news from Europe, from Bombay, and from Simla; and with a careless hand he had taken up the *Times of India*.

It was this journal that had had so great an influence on the fate of our three travellers, by affording them an object for their expedition. And now it produced another unexpected effect on the good doctor.

Holbeck had hardly opened it, when he made a start of surprise, adjusted his gold spectacles on his nose, read, re-read the paragraph which had so greatly excited his attention, and then burst into a peal of laughter, so long and so uproarious that Barbarou and Everest came running up, thinking their friend had gone stark staring mad.

It was not until the doctor had calmed down considerably that he found words to speak, and then he exclaimed,—

“Talk about the reporters of old Europe! Give the palm to the journalists of young India! What style! what emphasis! None of the mysteries of hyperbole are unknown to them!”

“What is the matter with them?” interrupted Everest.

“My dear friend,” said Holbeck, “read that. I can’t read it again without dying of laughing.”

His lordship took the paper, and, having found the column pointed out by the doctor, read in a loud voice the following article:—

“We hear that the celebrated Dr. Holbeck, Fellow of the Royal Society, and Corresponding Member of the Institute of France, is about to leave this town to begin his scientific exploration of Central India. The illustrious naturalist intends to prosecute his zoological examination of the jungle fauna, and to study from the life the morphology and economy of the gigantic *felidæ*, who are the pride and terror of our peninsula.”

“Isn’t that beautiful?” interrupted Holbeck—  
“the gigantic *felidæ*, who are the pride and the terror of our peninsula! But go on! your turn is coming.”

Everest resumed his reading:—

“In order to have a constant supply of the subjects so necessary for his researches, the celebrated scientist has brought with him two young sportsmen who have acquired considerable renown in Europe. One of them, Mr. Barbarou, of Marseilles, is principally known by his exploits in Africa; the other, Mr. Everest, is a countryman of ours, and from his tenderest infancy has devoted himself to the most adventurous journeys in the most extraordinary countries. We further hear that Dr. Holbeck and his assistants contemplate being present at the festivities about to be organized by his Highness the Maharajah of



Mahavellipore. If this is so, our Indo-Britannic sportsmen will have to keep a sharp look-out lest the palm of victory be borne off by our illustrious visitors. Above all, they must beware of the wonderful dexterity of Mr. Barbarou."

"What do you say to that?" asked Holbeck. "Don't you think he is a well-informed journalist? You would imagine that he had reviewed our passports and hidden himself under the table the day that we decided to go to Mahavellipore."

"These journalists are really extraordinary people," said the sailor; "what they do not know, they imagine."

"Even the African glories of the celebrated Mr. Barbarou," remarked Holbeck maliciously. "For my part," added he, "I think the newspaper men are very much like ourselves, and only know what they wish to say. They seem this time to have been very badly informed."

And, addressing the Marseillais, he said, with affected severity,—

"Mr. Barbarou, if you wish to see your name in print, in a newspaper, you must address yourself to us. We will indite a note, in which, with all due care of your reputation, we will protect the truth against these rude attempts."

"But, my dear Holbeck," stammered poor Barbarou, "I assure you that I had no intention of—that it is not my fault. The evening before we came away I exchanged a few words on the subject with a very polite gentleman I had formerly seen at the *table-d'hôte*—"

"Yes," remarked Holbeck, "I see how the thing has happened, but you did not consider how

your stupid boastings would place us in a false position with regard to our friend Everest. Here am I, a humble bird-stuffer, a traveller for a firm in the hat-feather line, made to pass off as my assistant a peer of the United Kingdom! Is not that an abomination of desolation, a crime of lèse-aristocracy, that might lead me to the gallows?"

Barbarou bowed his head in confusion, while Holbeck, with his spectacles on his forehead, and his eyes sparkling maliciously, crushed the victim beneath his chariot-wheels.

The solemn Everest could not resist this example of high comedy, and in his turn made the verandah resound with the most joyous peal of laughter that had ever escaped from his aristocratic lips.

"Stop, Holbeck; do not annihilate our unfortunate friend. He deserves our congratulations. On my behalf I beg to thank him a thousand times for having, willingly or unwillingly, relieved me of a weight that has been pressing me down. He has discovered the solution which all my ingenuity failed to hit upon."

"How so?" asked Holbeck, quite nonplussed.

"Well, during the last few days, since I learnt that we shall not be the only people at Mahavellipore, and that probably a number of English sportsmen will attend the maharajah's meeting, I have been very near abandoning our expedition altogether."

"I do not understand you," said the doctor.

"That is because you do not know English society. You do not know the effect produced

on all these people by the appearance amongst them of a live lord. Nearly every one would fall prostrate before the prestige of my name and my fortune. Every snob—and there never was a meeting of Englishmen yet without there being a snob amongst them—every snob would transform me into a manitou. In a day or so, worried and wearied by these worshippers of aristocratic glory, I should have had to take refuge in flight.”

“But I do not see how you are going to avoid the danger,” said the doctor.

“The danger? But it has vanished,” replied Everest. “Henceforth I am no longer a lord, I am no longer a peer of the realm, I am no longer a rich man—I am simply Mr. Everest, assistant, clerk, collector, or whatever you like, to the illustrious Dr. Holbeck. I am saved at one blow, and in a way that I never thought of.”

“Do you really intend to play the part that this absurd newspaper has given you?” said Holbeck. “I do not think that I ought—”

“My dear, good friend,” said Everest appealingly, “you will do it for me. It may be the chance which will give you the means of effecting this cure which you seem to wish so much. I repeat that the few lines in this newspaper have opened quite a new horizon to me. Just think that, thanks to him, I shall for the first time escape from the tyranny of rank and fortune, which has plagued me for so many years. I have the power to throw off this golden armour which has crushed me and separated me from the rest of the world. Men will be able to judge me for my merits, and not for my decorations. Oh, the

happiness of mediocrity ! Happy are those who have known no other fate ! ”

“ Well, my dear Everest,” said Holbeck, “ we will do as you desire. The artifice is a very inoffensive one, and you can abandon it when you like.”

And so it was decided that henceforth “ his lordship ” should disappear, and that “ Mr. Everest ” should take his place, and become assistant naturalist to the doctor ; and, in order to avoid any indiscretion, the matter was explained to Latchman, who was the only native servant acquainted with the true state of the case, and he was informed that if he ever gave the title of “ lord ” to Everest he would be immediately dismissed. As for the faithful John, his absolute devotion could be relied on.

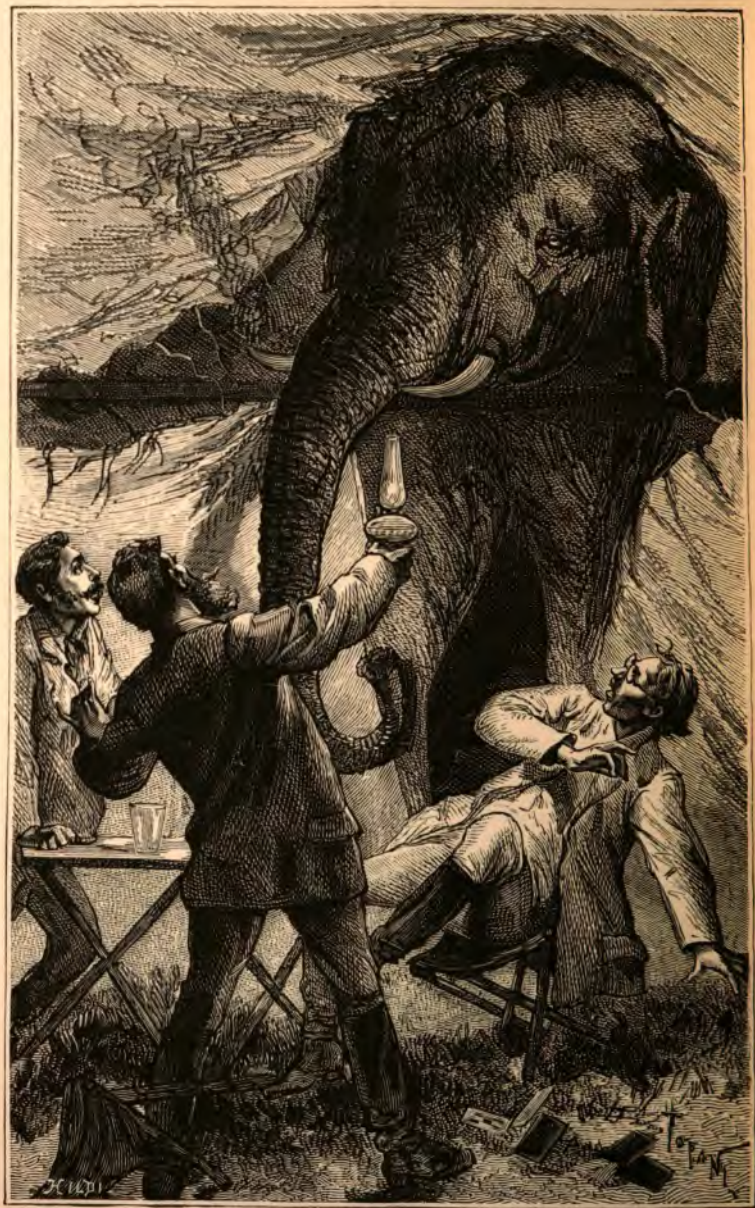
A few days afterwards the travellers, having reorganized the party, left Poona on their way to Mahavellipore.

Bearing to the north they crossed the angle of the states of the Nizam, and, without adventure worthy of note, reached the first outliers of the Satpoora chain. Not being pressed for time, they made a slight détour to the west to visit the wonderful Buddhist temples of Ellora and Ajunta.

It was not far from this latter place that an adventure happened to Barbarou which ought to cover him with immortal glory.

The travellers, leaving behind them their heavy baggage, had taken up their quarters in a single tent at the foot of the mountain in which are the immense catacombs. The day was devoted to





In the open doorway appeared the head of a gigantic elephant.

the examination of these curious monuments, and then after dinner the travellers, according to custom, sat down to enjoy their pipes and Schiedam.

To prevent the invasion of mosquitoes and other insects which would be attracted by the light, the heavy cotton curtain forming the door of the tent had been carefully shut, and the three friends were chatting across the table, when suddenly the whole tent shook, and as they looked round to see what caused this extraordinary agitation the heavy curtain was lifted, or rather roughly snatched away, and in the open doorway appeared the head of a gigantic elephant. At this apparition the three men remained motionless in their chairs, as if turned to stone, and to none of them occurred the thought of catching up one of the rifles that were resting against the wall.

They had, indeed, no time to do so, for the elephant, probably a wild one from a neighbouring keddah, seemingly without the least astonishment at finding himself face to face with the three, lifted up the roof of the tent with his head, and threateningly swung out his trunk at the doctor.

Holbeck had only just time to draw back, but Barbarou had now sprung to his feet, and, seizing the lighted lamp, hurled it with all his strength against the animal's forehead. The glass broke at the blow, and the blazing oil covered the elephant's trunk with a sheet of flame. With a horrible cry of anger and pain, the beast quickly drew back, shook off the curtains which clung to

him, and fled across the country, howling wildly. Everest had snatched up his rifle, but by the time he got outside the elephant was a long way off in full gallop across the plain, and for some time the travellers could trace his progress by the light of his burning trunk.

"Barbarou," said Holbeck, "there is a story for you, well worthy of a place in your long series of exploits. A furious elephant defeated at a single blow from a—paraffin lamp. That is quite a novelty, of which there has up to the present been no mention in hunting records. Without your presence of mind, I do not know what we should have done, shut up in these canvas walls with a rogue elephant. We should have been smashed into marmalade before we had had time to touch rifle or revolver."







And thus they made their entry.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CAMP IN THE ARMOUDJAN.

THE kingdom of Mahavellipore makes rather an imposing figure on the map. Extending along the south of the great river Nirbada, it embraces within its winding frontiers a very large part of Gondvana, and adjoins Berar. Notwithstanding its area, however, it is only one of the secondary principalities of Central India. In fact, with the exception of a few fine fertile valleys, such as that in which the capital is built, the surface is rugged and mountainous, and ridged with the crests and escarpments of the hill mass of Mahadeo, which forms one of the nuclei of the backbone of the peninsula. These superb mountains are hidden beneath a thick mantle of gloomy forest, where wander half-naked savages, who have no other weapons than bows and arrows with which to contend with the innumerable beasts of prey.

The savages are the ferocious Gonds, the ancient masters of the country, and little by little they have been edged back into these solitudes by the patient invasion of the Hindus, who have colonized and cultivated the richest of the valleys.

It is hardly a hundred years since the ancestor of the reigning sovereign established himself in this wilderness. He was one of the Mahratta warriors who profited by the decay of the great Moguls to give the empire to fire and sword. He was the peishwa's general, and followed the example of most of his colleagues—that is to say, when he considered his booty sufficient, he handed in his resignation, and retired with his treasures into this mountain stronghold, where none could dispute with him. An able politician, he then threw in his lot with the English, whose power was ever on the increase, became their friend, and under their protection was confirmed in peaceable possession of the fruits of his robberies.



And that is how Goulab Sing, his grandson, found himself the very rich sovereign of a very poor country.

Adored by his subjects, whom he left alone, having, thanks to the paternal forethought, no occasion to tax them, the prince ought to have been the very happiest of maharajahs. Something, however, was wanted to make his happiness complete.

Isolated in this out-of-the-way corner of a savage country, he knew not what to do with his

immense revenues. The idea never occurred to him to devote at least a part of them to the improvement of his kingdom or his subjects; such a preposterous notion never enters the head of the best of Indian princelets. In vain he expended his wealth whenever possible in keeping up a pomp and ceremony quite Asiatic; but one thing was wanting, and that was spectators more worthy of appreciating these wonders than poor brutish Gonds or timorous Hindu traders. He wished, like his powerful neighbours of Bhopal and Scindia, to attract Europeans to his court, and to give himself the satisfaction of dazzling them with his Oriental luxury. But travellers passed on without turning aside to visit Mahavelipore, and the British Government, knowing the principality to be tranquil and well administered, seemed to have quite forgotten its existence.

The brave Goulab Sing was preparing to resign his crown, and, putting his wealth into a portmanteau, start off for Calcutta, to find there a theatre more worthy of his glory, when his peace of mind was troubled by the appearance on the scene of the terrible King of the Tigers.

This gigantic animal had one fine morning left his cave in the mountains, and taken up his abode in a valley close to the capital. Soon his depredations extended up to the very walls of the town. The luxurious maharajah could from the depths of his palace hear the terrible roars of the man-eater.

Vainly, as stated in the proclamation, had the prince done his utmost to rid his subjects of the monster. Everything had failed, and Goulab

of a sudden, "has he not come? I do not notice his name in this list of distinguished guests."

"I pray his sublime Highness to pardon his devoted slave," said the minister, with a low bow, "the illustrious doctor arrived this very morning, and I inadvertently omitted to add his name."

"Dr. Holbeck, the most learned representative of European science, arrives in my dominions, and you do not immediately inform me of it!" said the king, with a terrible frown.

"The doctor only arrived this morning," said Nam Rao, in confusion, "accompanied by Mr. Barbarou, of Marseilles, and Mr. Everest. I have only just been informed of it. In accordance with the commands of your Highness the illustrious stranger was received at the entrance to the capital by the kilidar in person. When asked by the kilidar what honours he claimed, the doctor replied that he left it entirely to him, and owing to the doubt under the circumstances the commandant of the fortress gave him a salute of nine guns. I think that your sublime Highness—"

"You should have given him eleven," said the king. "The learned are the equals of princes. We will repair the oversight on an early occasion. Continue."

"The kilidar conducted the doctor and suite to the Armoudjan Bagh, and he himself saw that the tents were placed in a position suitable to the dignity of the noble visitor, between those of General Butnot and Colonel Shaughnessy."

"It is well," said the king; "I am satisfied. At the first durbar I will do honour to this man."

His reports will make my magnificence known to the peoples of the earth."

And so the doctor's modest arrival had been transformed into a triumphal procession.

Holbeck had been much surprised at the splendour of his reception, and had timidly endeavoured to protest against all this pompous display; but seeing that the more he protested the more the rajah's people thought he was discontented, and redoubled their bowings and scrapings, he thought it best to submit.

"Waste your powder as you please," he said. "If it amuses you, it don't hurt me."

Barbarou was literally beside himself with the purest joy. At length he had discovered a country where he was appreciated according to his merits; and proudly bestriding his steed, with waving plume and hand on hip, he caracoled along by the doctor's white mule.

Everest thoroughly entered into the spirit of his part, and modestly followed, as if eclipsed by the two glorious figures that preceded him.

And thus they made their entry into the camp of Armoudjan.

The appearance presented by the camp was such as to strike any one not initiated into the luxurious surroundings of our Indo-Britannic officials. The tents, in all their grandeur and elegance, stretched in long lines down each side of a wide avenue. With their outbuildings of all sorts, kitchens, bath-rooms, stables, rooms for servants and for baggage, they displayed a brilliant city of nomads, but of nomads refined and civilized. Native servants in livery, pages,

grooms, quite a crowd of sepoy, shikaris, and domestics, thronged the principal avenue, while the neighing of the horses and the barking of the dogs were heard above all, and the smoke-wreaths from the fires rose among the orange-trees, citron-trees, myrtles, and palms which filled the garden.

"You might call it a huge pleasure-fair," said Barbarou admiringly.

"Your comparison seems somewhat trivial," said Holbeck. "I think the view is one of the most curious and charming I ever saw. Call it a fair? It is a canvas town in an enchanted park."

The arrival of the travellers seemed to have attracted no attention from the guests in camp. They took possession of their tents in peace, after having dismissed the representative of the maharajah.

But such a number of neighbours rather embarrassed them. Who were these people? How would they get on with them? Would they be received well or otherwise? Everest in particular had a vague feeling that his true position would be discovered.

After their breakfast, while enjoying a smoke, they debated these important questions.

Holbeck sagaciously concluded,—

"What is the good of our thinking about what is going to happen? If these people receive us coldly, we can turn our backs on them. We have not come here to pay visits, but to see a curious country and relieve the poor rajah of his tiger. After all, you are abusing your compatriots,

Mr. Everest. All those I have met on my travels have been the most agreeable fellows in the world."

It is impossible to say what would have been the young man's reply, for at the moment Latchman entered bearing a tray, which he presented to Holbeck. The doctor picked up the card that was on it, adjusted his spectacles, and read,—

"Colonel Shaughnessy, V.C., C.S.I."

"Already!" exclaimed Everest, while the doctor calmly turned to Latchman, and said,—

"Ask the gentleman in."

The curtain which formed the door of the tent was immediately drawn aside, and allowed the visitor to enter. He was a tall, fine-looking man, well built, and wearing a brown silk lounging-coat. His good-looking, good-humoured face bore an immense beard, which reached down almost to his belt, and was quite white, contrasting well with the healthy colour of the skin bronzed by the Indian sun.

The colonel halted, and politely inquired,—

"Dr. Holbeck?"

"I am he," said the doctor, advancing and clasping the hand which the officer cordially held out to him.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance," said he. "And these gentlemen?"

"Mr. Barbarou, Mr. Everest," said the doctor.

The colonel bowed, and in turn shook hands with the sailor and the young Englishman. "You will pardon me, gentlemen," said he, "for having allowed so short a time to elapse between

your arrival and my visit. But for some days we have been expecting you. I have hastened to acquit myself of the mission with which I have been entrusted."

"A mission!" said the doctor, with surprise, and he invited the officer to sit down.

When he had seated himself, he continued, "The gracious invitation of the Maharajah Goulab Sing, our host, has brought together in this garden a large number of sportsmen from all parts of India to join in an enterprise which, you will allow me to say, is one of the purest philanthropy. Community of sentiment has inspired us with the idea of meeting together in a brotherly way, so as to more certainly attain our desired object, and also"—and here the colonel gave a significant smile—"to pass the time as agreeably as possible under the circumstances. For this purpose we have started the Tigerslayers' Club of Mahavellipore, composed of all the sportsmen here present and their families. We heard from the newspapers that you were thinking of paying a visit to the town, and we thought perhaps you would not object to become an honorary member of our club. As being the oldest of those here, I have been elected president, and in that position I have been asked to acquaint you with the decision of my colleagues, and to express the hope that you will do us the honour of accepting the invitation."

"Believe me, sir," said the doctor, "I feel very greatly honoured. My humble scientific works—"

"Are appreciated by all at their true value,"



interrupted the colonel, in his most affable tone. "Our friend Cunningham told us the other day that he had been reading your famous paper which you sent to the Royal Society on *Cryptocercus atratus*.

"I am quite overpowered," stammered the doctor, to whom this was something like a surprise.

"Then, my dear doctor, it is understood? As for these gentlemen, may I, as they are sportsmen, propose them as ordinary members of the club? We can none of us ignore the exploits of Mr. Barbarou."

It was Barbarou's turn to make a profound bow.

The colonel did not dare to say anything about the exploits of Everest, as he very justly concluded that they did not extend beyond those mentioned in the article in the *Times of India*.

"This evening," continued the colonel, "we begin our family parties in the pavilion. We expect you to turn up to dinner. Seven o'clock, sharp!"

And as the doctor was beginning a gesture of protest, the colonel arose and checked him with, "No excuses; they are not allowed. The ladies made me promise that I would bring you with me, dead or alive. Besides, it is only a friendly meeting of brothers-in-arms. No ceremony. You can wear a frock-coat, doctor, and your friends can mount a dress-coat and white choker. You need not make any fuss," and lifting up the door, he disappeared, leaving the travellers somewhat surprised at this abrupt invitation.

Barbarou was the first to find his tongue. "No ceremony!" he growled; "simply a white choker! Does the old soldier fancy that I go about with the ribbon of the White Elephant and the green cross of the Lizard? A swallow-tail coat, eh? I haven't got one with me!"





The lady was only very slightly impressed.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE TIGERSLAYERS' CLUB.

EVEREST supported Barbarou in protesting against the colonel's invitation, which he stigmatized as inopportune and impossible to accept, and ended by peremptorily declaring that he would not go, and that he had not resigned membership of the Carlton to join such a very mixed assembly as this.

"Take care," said Holbeck, playfully threatening him. "'Very mixed' seems to me rather hard on a club of which I have just been made an honorary member, and it rather sounds as though it came from some lord or other. You have not got rid of the golden armour that you so gallantly threw to the winds as completely as

you think. Have you forgotten that you are only an assistant naturalist, and that in that position you ought to be happy and proud that, under my patronage, there should be thrown open to you the doors of a world generally so jealously guarded from your humble fellows? Or are you already afraid that the modest sportsman will not receive that amount of notice which formerly proved too much for his Siamese twin, the peer of the United Kingdom? At the last moment you recoil from an experience which to me would seem to be highly interesting. You are at liberty to do as you please, but in that case let us lift the curtain, and I will go in search of the colonel, and give him warning as to the noble personage he may soon expect. I am sure he will be most humiliated to find that he failed to recognize your lordship."

Holbeck's chaff made Everest smile.

"You are right, doctor," said he; "I have not yet completely thrown off my burning Nessus' shirt. Aristocratic prejudices will come up, in spite of me, but I promise to shake off the principal ones, and you will soon find no trace of them. To give you an immediate proof of my sincerity, I will call John to explore my boxes and drag from their depths the garment of ceremony."

"And what am I to do?" said Barbarou. "What is to happen to me? When I started for India I never expected to go to such affairs as this, and I entirely omitted to provide myself with what we sailors call a clawhammer."

"It is rather awkward," said Holbeck. "If I

could only spare one of my frock-coats, we might shape off the skirts with the scissors; but then I don't see how we could get your giant form into my insect's skin. Anyhow, you cannot present yourself before the tiger-slayers and their ladies in the get-up of a Calabrian bandit."

"Perhaps I had better put on my best sea-suit," said Barbarou. "There is braid on the collar and cuffs, and the foul anchor on my cap will make me look quite spruce."

"Wait a little," said Everest, who seemed rather alarmed at this proposition, "I dare say we can manage it. There certainly ought to be more than one coat in my boxes. We are about the same height; I'll lend you a coat."

John was immediately summoned, and after hunting through the boxes disinterred two coats of irreproachable cut.

Barbarou was presented with one, and immediately proceeded to try it on. With John's assistance he managed to get into the elegant garment, and when in he seemed to be clasped in a vice. His shoulders were much broader than those of Everest, and his back was so squeezed up that he could hardly move.

However, it was Hobson's choice, and as Everest assured him that the coat fitted to perfection, the sailor had to be satisfied; and when night approached, the three friends, in full costume, strolled off to the club of the tigerslayers.

The president had secured the pavilion in the centre of the garden for the purposes of the club. It was of white marble, surrounded by traceried arcades and terraces. The maharajah had de-

corated it with a profusion of carpets and rich tapestry, with vases of bronze and porcelain, and valuable furniture and chandeliers; and the pavilion in its frame of verdure seemed like a palace in fairyland.

Soldiers of the royal guard, in their splendid armour, stood sentry on the terraces, while under the verandahs, festooned with their glittering lustres, the servants in their bright-coloured liveries moved to and fro.

On their arrival the three travellers were received by a master of the ceremonies, who led them across the marble antechambers to a door, and, lifting the heavy drapery, gave them entrance to the room.

Barbarou, unaccustomed to much splendour, was quite dazzled at finding himself, with his friends, amid such prodigious luxury. The walls and floor were hidden beneath draperies of gold and silver stripes, while from the vaulted ceiling, cut up into a thousand facets by its brilliant hues, hung an immense lustre of marvellous richness, carrying more than a thousand candles. In the room there was a crowd just as bright and dazzling as the glittering frame which surrounded them—officers and generals covered with lace and decorations, diplomatic agents in their gala uniforms, ladies in low dresses, many wearing their diamond jewellery.

The gallant sailor might well open his eyes, for such luxury would have astonished many less humble than he was. Even the impassible Everest confessed that the Anglo-Indian functionaries knew how to do things properly.

As he saw them enter, Colonel Shaughnessy hurried towards them with open arms and beaming face. "Bravo, doctor!" he exclaimed; "that is what I call military punctuality. Seven o'clock is just striking. I will take advantage of the few moments we have before dinner to introduce you to these ladies, who are expecting you impatiently."



And, like a scrupulous observer of society's laws, the gallant colonel marched the doctor off towards the corner of the room, where the wife of the wealthy General Butnot was enthroned, surrounded by her four daughters, the Misses Victoria, Arabella, Wilhelmina, and Maude Butnot, who were as long and as parched as their august mamma was round and blooming.

The lady apparently was only very slightly impressed by the look of the doctor—that is to say, her very florid countenance just wrinkled into a grimace which did duty for a feeble smile. She was, in truth, entirely wrapped up in the idea of finding husbands for her daughters, and there was little chance of Holbeck wishing to add his name to the list of their admirers.

It was quite different with Mrs. Whatafter, the wife of the Assistant-Deputy-Commissioner. This elegant lady, as soon as she saw the doctor, jerked her head so violently that her long fair curls shook about in front of her very long nose, as she exclaimed that she was indeed proud to shake hands with one of the princes of science.

Barbarou and Everest remained near the door, in that pitiless isolation to which English society condemns such as have "not been introduced." Everest, fully conversant with the custom, felt quite at his ease; while Barbarou, much humiliated at being left out in the cold, followed Holbeck's triumphal course with an envious eye.

Under the colonel's guidance the doctor bore himself most complaisantly. After bowing to Mrs. Beynon the gracious, to Mrs. Waytown the charming, he submitted with coolness to the haughty examination of Mrs. Peernose the superb, and exchanged a few words with the pleasant Mrs. Shortbody, who sat surrounded by quite a swarm of laughing and chatting young misses, among whom were four of her own daughters. Then, piloted by his guide, he was headed into the group of men that clustered under the chandelier, and made his way through them with an immense amount of very vigorous hand-shaking.

And then the colonel seemed to remember the existence of his two companions, and stepped up to them with, "Allow me to continue my character of introducer, and to present you to your new comrades."

And, bringing them up to the sportsmen, he presented them right and left.

In this monotonous ceremony Everest learnt with some astonishment that the stout little man with the short legs and the face almost hidden in his beard, whom he had been admiring since his arrival, was no other than the celebrated General Butnot; while the long, thin personage close to



him was Assistant-Deputy-Commissioner What-after, the husband of the poetic admirer of the princes of science. He exchanged hand-shakings with the jovial Dr. Cunningham, the imposing magistrate Peernose, the insignificant Captain Beynon, the spiteful political Waytown, and the amiable Rev. Mr. Shortbody, without counting the smaller fry of subalterns, secretaries, &c.; but, like Barbarou, he was not invited to pass in review down the formidable line of ladies, old and young.

In a few minutes the three travellers, henceforth free of the club, were dispersed among the groups. Little Butnot had taken possession of Barbarou, who, squeezed up in his coat, and fearing every moment to hear the stitches go, answered the general's questions with much reserve, and maintained quite an aristocratic rigidity, which won general admiration. Holbeck, quitting the society of the men, had thrown himself into that of the women, whom he seemed to have conquered at first sight. Everest soon discovered that he was considered a very secondary individual, and feeling in consequence rather pleased than otherwise, had abandoned the bigger guns and joined the very much jollier group of subs. and secs. and other *minores*.

Half-past seven rang out from the magnificent clock. Two belaced and beturbaned footmen drew apart the huge hangings which ornamented one side of the apartment, and across the marble arcade there appeared the dining-room resplendent with light, with its immense table covered with glasses and flowers and vases of silver and porce-

lain from China and Japan. At the same moment a khitmatgar solemnly announced,—

“The dinner of the most honourable ladies is served.”

The gentlemen, with much gravity and formality, advanced to offer their arms to the ladies old and young. The double file was formed according to the strictest rules of etiquette, the worthy president opening the procession with the wife of General Butnot, followed by the doctor, who had been harpooned by the enthusiastic Mrs. Whatafter. A few couples behind them came the superb Barbarou, bearing on his arm the haughty Peernose.

The last couple was formed, and Everest, seeing that he was left alone, gloomily followed.

At this moment a young lady in a dress of plain white muslin entered the room at a run, and, seeing Everest by himself, said gaily as she came behind him,—

“I am always late. What will papa say?”

She was on the point of touching his arm, when he turned round and made her a low bow.

The lady uttered a gentle cry of surprise.

“I beg your pardon,” said she, “I thought you were one of us.”

“I have only been elected a member of the club to-day,” said Everest, colouring slightly.

“And as circumstances oblige me to introduce myself, allow me to say that my name is Everest, and that I am assistant naturalist to Dr. Holbeck.”

“That is quite sufficient, sir,” said the lady demurely. “I have heard papa speak of the

famous doctor, and as I am the president's daughter I am entitled to dispense with a little ceremony."

And, taking Everest's arm, they entered the dining-room.

The personages of importance, generals, colonels, diplomatists, and Dr. Holbeck, were seated in the centre of the table, while the younger people sat down in the order in which they entered.

Everest found himself the neighbour of a very amiable girl. He knew that she was the colonel's daughter, and from the few words they exchanged during dinner he learnt that Miss Shaughnessy had arrived from England, where her father had sent her to finish her education after her mother's death; and that since her return to India she had been under the charge of her aunt, the superb Mrs. Peernose.

In the exchange of these ordinary confidences Everest was very reserved; he explained that, being desirous of paying a visit to India, he had availed himself of the opportunity of joining the eminent Dr. Holbeck. But, in spite of his firm resolution to find himself thoroughly bored by the club of tigerslayers, he was obliged to confess to himself that the charming Miss Shaughnessy had completely dissipated this idea.

The dinner was very brilliant. Dr. Holbeck bore off all the honours, and the gallant naturalist showed that under his black frock-coat there breathed not only a thoroughly good fellow and a conscientious man of science, but also an accomplished gentleman.

Barbarou, thanks to the coat which tortured

him and crippled all his movements, was doomed to see the most exquisite dishes pass by untasted, and, in the eyes of his distinguished neighbours, proved himself the very ideal of sobriety and good breeding.

The dessert had begun. The president lightly tapped the table with the handle of his knife. He rose and solemnly remarked,—

“Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the health of her most gracious majesty the Queen!”

The gentlemen rose as one man, and after repeating, “The Queen! the Queen!” emptied their glasses.

The lists were opened, and the usual toasts followed. Holbeck proposed the ladies. Said he,—

“Gentlemen, I drink to those who, as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters, are the joy, the support, and the charm of human existence—to those who by their presence elevate our hearts, ennoble our thoughts, and magnify our actions. Gentlemen, I drink to ‘The Ladies!’”

The toast was received with three tremendous cheers, and the murmur of approbation had hardly died away when the doctor continued,—

“Gentlemen, I cannot resume my seat without expressing to you my deep sense of the honour you have done the humble companions in my labours and myself in so graciously receiving us. I have but one regret, and that is that this association which we are founding to-day is doomed by the force of circumstances to have but a limited existence. For me, gentlemen, this day, and those that are to follow it, in which we shall



Holbeck proposed the ladies.



be occupied in our noble work, will be graven on my memory as amongst the happiest in my life, and I am proud to be able to be the first to give you 'Three cheers for the Tigerslayers' Club.'"

A renewed thunder of bravos and hurrahs was the answer to this natty little speech, and when the doctor sat down Mrs. Whatafter murmured in his ear that she had never listened to a toast more permeated with scientific humour than that which he had just given.

And now little General Butnot suddenly rose, and, having obtained silence, spoke as follows,—

"Ladies and gentlemen, the words that we have just heard from our eminent friend have awakened in my mind, as in yours, a very melancholy thought. We are gathered together here for an object which our president the other day very aptly described as one of high philanthropy. We shall in the early future unfortunately be all dispersed. Those ties of friendship, of brotherhood, which I see already forming round us, and which will grow stronger from day to day—those ties, ladies and gentlemen, will be suddenly and fatally broken. The Tigerslayers' Club will then for us be no more than a memory—the memory of a mission nobly accomplished; a memory of pleasant hours spent in each other's company; but to this memory there will be imperishably attached that of the man who will remain the honour of our brief union—that is to say, of the *savant* who amongst us personifies the scientific glory of the leading nations of the world. Ladies and gentlemen, I drink to the health of our illustrious

colleague, the immortal naturalist, Dr. Holbeck!"

The glasses of all present were held out towards the doctor, who received the acclamations with a peculiarly knowing smile.







The doctor was shot off.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE AUDIENCE.

THE sun was already high on the horizon when Holbeck awoke from a long, sound sleep. A little ashamed of his laziness, he sprang out of bed at once, and quickly dressed himself.

"These English," said he, as he hurried on his clothes, "are really terrible with their invention of toasts. What with drinking to the queen, and the army and the navy, and science, and the ladies, and all the other sublunary administrations, it is a wonder that the brain of a peaceful naturalist did not get a little muddled. Well, it doesn't matter, as it happens. These sportsmen seem to be very jolly fellows. I am curious to hear what impression they have made on our melancholy friend Everest."

And as he said so the doctor passed his watch-chain through the button-hole of his waist-

coat, and mechanically gave a glance at the dial.

"It is twelve o'clock!" he exclaimed. "I have been making a good thing of it. Whatever will my friends say? I suppose I shall have to stand a lot of chaff from Barbarou. But I wonder if he is up!"

The doctor stealthily lifted the curtain which separated his apartment from that of the sailor, and had a quiet laugh to himself as he saw that distinguished individual still fast asleep. And then he walked up to the bed and gave the sleeper a vigorous shaking.

"Well," said he indignantly, "these are fine goings on, Mr. Barbarou! I suppose if I had left you alone, you would have snored away till to-morrow! Do you know what time it is, you lazy-bones? It is twelve o'clock, and the breakfast is getting cold, waiting for you."

Barbarou, only half awake, regarded the doctor with astonishment.

"Is that the effect produced on you by the aristocratic society that you were so anxious to enter? Do you think that I, the most eminent doctor Holbeck, can afford to keep in my service a man who stays in bed till this time in the morning? What have you been dreaming about? That superb coat that a noble lord had the weakness to trust to your tender mercies?"

The mere suggestion seemed to recall Barbarou to his senses. He jumped out of bed and ran to the chair on which he had hung the fashionable garment, and carefully examined all the stitches. Having found them intact, he gave a deep sigh of relief.

"You quite frightened me," he said; "that wretched coat made me tremble all the evening, and quite spoilt my pleasure. I expected every minute to hear the stitches go, and while I was asleep I dreamt that I still had it on, and I heard something crack, and then you awoke me. I must have slept very soundly, but—"

"Be quick, be quick!" interrupted Holbeck. "Everest is waiting for us."

As they came out of the tent together they saw the young Englishman dismounting from his horse.

"Good morning, you fellows," he said. "It was so bright and pleasant that I was up just after daybreak, and have had a long turn outside the town. The neighbourhood is beautifully wooded, and there are several splendid views. I thought you would be rather tired after yesterday evening."

"Well, I was," said Holbeck, with a smile. "The extravagant compliments with which I was bombarded were almost enough to turn a man's head."

"You bore it like an accomplished gentleman, doctor, and the effort deserved a little extra indulgence. But the fresh air has given me an appetite, and I am ready to do justice to the handiwork of our bawarchi."

Breakfast was waiting for them, and they sat down.

"Latchman has just told me," said Everest, "that a royal messenger came round from the palace this morning to announce that his Highness is going to give us a solemn audience to-day."

for her to finish her education, and perhaps in the hope that she might get married. Having himself no fortune, he could not think of retiring, nor of leaving a post which has the reputation of being a dangerous one. But notwithstanding his entreaties, this young lady, who was living in London with very wealthy relatives, has come back to her father to share his exile. He told me that she had been with him about a year, and that it had seemed during the time as though Khairwara were a paradise, for her clear ringing laugh and constant cheerfulness have quite metamorphosed that gloomy place. Now don't you think it a great piece of devotion on the part of this girl of eighteen?"

"It is a fine, noble action!" said Everest, with much warmth.

At this moment John entered, announcing the colonel, who followed him in without waiting.

"Good morning, gentlemen!" he exclaimed in his hearty voice. "Did you sleep well, doctor?"

"Very," said Holbeck.

"I have called on you three to continue my part of introducer, and take you on to his Highness, who is waiting for you in dharbar."

Holbeck and his two companions were soon ready to follow the colonel. Barbarou could not on this occasion resist the temptation of putting on his old captain's uniform.

A caparisoned elephant was in waiting to convey the noble visitors to the palace. At a sign from the mahout on his neck the enormous brute sank to the ground; a small ladder was placed against his flank, and the king's guests climbed into the

howdah and sat down back to back, Holbeck and the colonel on the right side—the seat of honour—Everest and Barbarou on the left.

“Hold tight!” exclaimed the colonel.

The elephant, as he said so, rose on his front legs, but so suddenly that the howdah was tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees, and without the colonel’s warning the doctor would have fallen off. Then, rising on his hind-legs, the giant regained his equilibrium, and slowly began his march with that peculiar swing which makes these animals seem as if they were dancing a polka.

“You would think we were on board ship in heavy weather,” said Barbarou, who, never having tried this kind of riding, was clinging to the back of the howdah.

“Yes,” said Everest, “the elephant’s gait gives you just the same sensation as rolling and pitching; and if it were not for his great height and majestic proportions, I could not understand why the great personages of India prefer this unwieldy animal to the horse.”

A troop of horsemen, in plumed helmets and rich uniforms, and armed with lances carrying long streamers, escorted the elephant and cleared a way through the crowd who had collected outside the Armoudjan to see the august strangers.

Passing beneath the lofty Gate of the Sun, where the guards were drawn up, and received them with military honours, the procession entered the town and moved along the wide street leading to the Mahal. The crowd increased as they progressed. Huddled together on the footway, and grouped in the balconies and terraces of the

houses, the inhabitants saluted with enthusiastic acclamations these terrible hunters, like Hercules, come to deliver their country from the monster which ravaged it.

Holbeck, much interested at their eagerness, replied to the salutes of the crowd by slight gestures of the hand that were quite kingly in their condescension. Barbarou was almost choked with gratified vanity, and swept off his hat majestically to the Hindu ladies in the balconies.

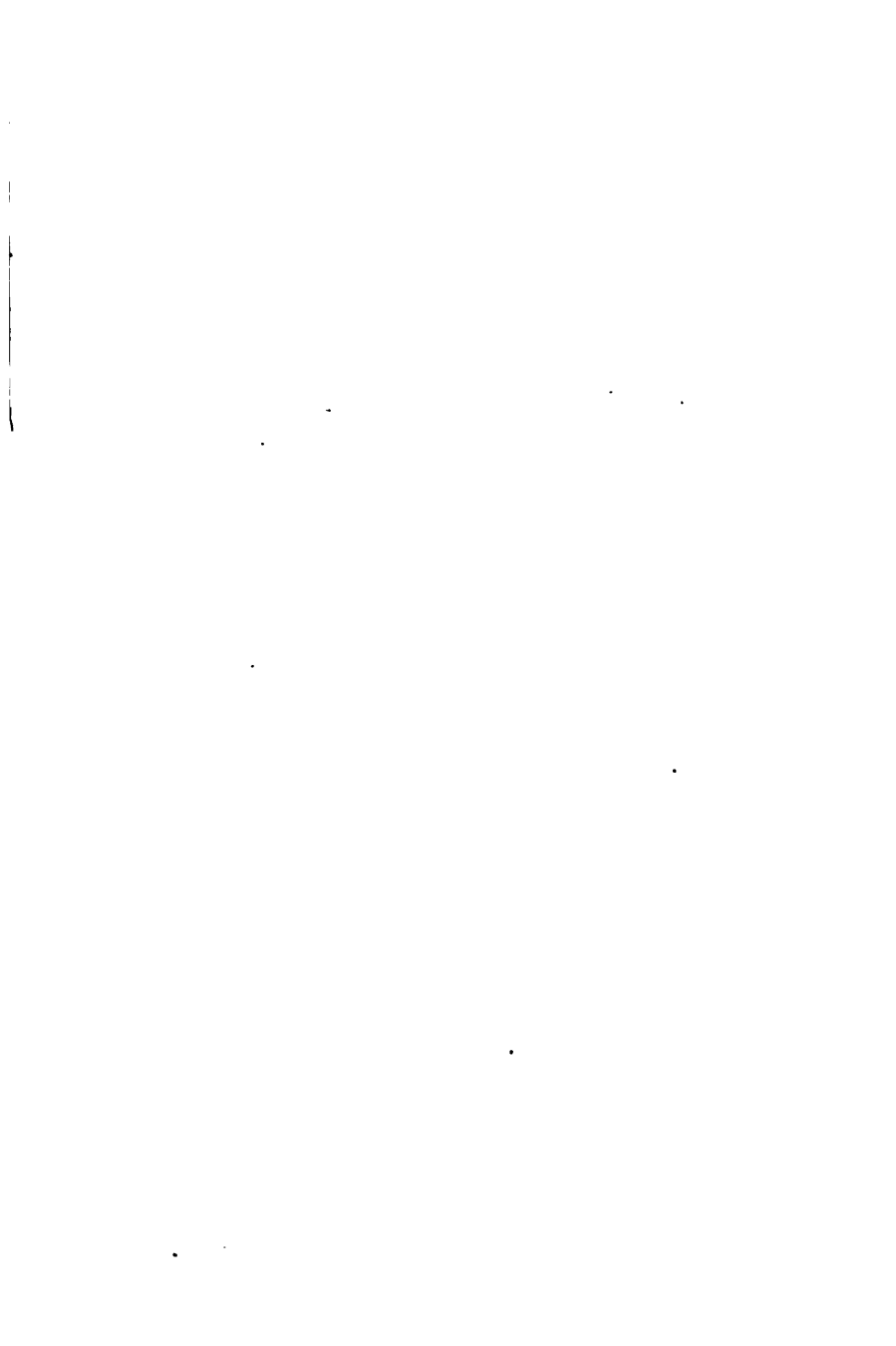
"Most certainly," said he to Everest, "I shall end by believing that I am really some great personage. When Admiral Paris arrived at St. Louis du Senegal he did not receive a grander reception than this."

But the brave Marseillais had not yet reached the end of his admiration.

As the procession entered the principal court of the palace, the regiments of the royal guard presented arms, and the military band struck up the "Marseillaise," a touching piece of attention on the part of the bandmaster, an old German in the service of the Maharajah. Then, as the elephant stopped, the cannon made its voice heard, and filled the air with eleven startling explosions. The master was repairing the oversight of his minister.



Holbeck, somewhat astounded at all this uproar, was absorbed in contemplation of the spectacle, when he was abruptly called back to reality by a violent shock. The elephant had knelt down, and





"Great and venerated philosopher."



this time pitched the howdah forward. Losing his equilibrium, the doctor was shot off into space, and fell helplessly into the arms of the minister, Nam Rao, who, standing ready to receive his master's guests, was considerably surprised at their very abrupt method of presenting themselves.

The doctor apologized with his customary vivacity, and the colonel and Holbeck's two companions having descended, a solemn march began towards the hall of the dharbar. Crossing quite a labyrinth of luxuriously furnished saloons, the visitors, escorted by the ministers, the vakeels, the kilidars, the thakoors, and all the high dignitaries of the kingdom, entered a vast hall whose white marble walls were hung with rich tapestries.

At the end, on a daïs, was the king enthroned, squatting cross-legged in the centre of a couch all glittering with gold.

As he saw the Europeans enter, the Maharajah hastily descended from his throne and advanced to meet them.

The visitors made a low bow, and the colonel, breaking the silence, said,—

"I have the honour to present to your most resplendent Highness Dr. Holbeck and his companions, Mr. Barbarou, of Marseilles, and Mr. Everest."

The king clasped the doctor's hand, and, without leaving go, led him to the daïs, where he set him down at his side, while he invited the other sahibs to take the chairs close by.

"Great and venerated philosopher," said Goulab Sing, in a loud voice, "when I learnt of your arrival in my dominions my heart was filled with

joy. Your presence is for me an un hoped-for honour, for you whom the greatest monarchs would be proud to treat as a brother have deigned to cast a friendly look on my humble person. I know that you represent at the same time science, which is the mother of humanity, and France, which shares with England the glory of being the first nation of the world. Your forehead is in my eyes encircled by a double aureola. Permit me to say that my kingdom is thine, and that at a sign from you my favour shall overwhelm all whom you choose to honour."

Holbeck, after the previous evening, had become too much accustomed to hyperbole to be dismayed by this truly Oriental harangue, and once again he showed how his subtle wit rose to the level of the highest situations. He replied, like an accomplished courtier,—

"Sublime Maharajah, the modesty of your language surpasses the immensity of your grandeur, and your name glows with unparalleled lustre in the midst of the illustrious cohort of the kings of India. Who can then ignore, from the equator to the arctic, that Goulab Sing of Mahavellipore is a puissant monarch, holding in his paternal hand the reins of his State, renowned for his wisdom, great in his glory and magnificence, and full of kind thought for those who, like me, are the humble servants of science? As soon as I set foot on the soil of India my greatest desire was to have the opportunity of beholding so noble a sovereign, and now my desire is gratified."

The Maharajah responded. He pitched his tone even higher than before, and compared the doctor

to a tree whose fruits fertilized the arid desert and the rugged mountain.

And so for half an hour the king and the doctor, like the heroes of Homer, hurled at each other's heads the most sounding epithets in the English vocabulary. Barbarou could not help laughing to himself. Once or twice his untimely merriment broke in upon the interview. This forgetfulness of proper diplomatic behaviour brought down on him a well-merited chastisement.

During the audience, two of the highest dignitaries of the court proceeded to perform the ceremony of *pansopari*. One of them, armed with a golden ewer, sprinkled each guest with rose-water, while the second gravely handed him a *pan*.

The sailor allowed himself to be sprinkled without flinching, but was very much at a loss when the second personage handed him the little square of green leaves rolled up and fastened with a clove, which constitutes the *pan*. Seeing his neighbours put their packets into their mouths, he gallantly imitated them, but at the first bite made a most frightful grimace. Beneath the betel-leaf there was hidden, as usual, a dreadful mixture of quick-lime, cardamoms, and spices, hot enough to fire a mine.

However, Barbarou persevered; and, ignorant that the mixture was intended to be chewed and spit out, set himself to work to get it down as soon as possible.

While he was doing so the Maharajah was comparing Holbeck to a mountain, whence the glaciers scattered their smiling waters over the earth around.

The little doctor compared to a mountain ! This was too much for Barbarou ! His lips opened to emit a tremendous roar of laughter, but the scandal of such an interruption was spared the court of Mahavellipore. The *pan* slipping down the sailor's throat stopped the laugh before it had hardly begun. He fell back choking, and could only utter a cry of distress.

Instantly help was at hand, and a few mouthfuls of fresh water brought him back to life.

But the incident had broken the charm. King and doctor made a last reverence, and the audience was at an end.

"What a pity !" said Holbeck, as he remounted the elephant. "I should like to have seen how much longer the Maharajah could have gone on. He would probably have compared me to the sun, round which the world revolves ; and I should have compared him to the universe, of which the radiant star is but an atom. After that I think I should have been obliged to shut up."





The Club in session.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE COLONEL'S PROGRAMME.

IN electing Colonel Shaughnessy president of the Tigerslayers' Club, the sportsmen assembled at Mahavellipore had made a particularly happy choice. It would have been difficult for them to have found a man who would have more thoroughly and enthusiastically devoted himself to the mission with which he had been entrusted. All who were acquainted with the old Indian officer knew that he was not only a pleasant companion, a thorough sportsman, and an accomplished gentleman, but also that he was an able and popular administrator.

And so none of those in camp at the Armoudjan had been astonished when the gallant colonel, in the exercise of his discretionary powers, had

in the first few days posted in the hall of the club a sort of proclamation, in which the rights and duties of the members were clearly defined.

In this proclamation the colonel, after fixing the amount of subscription, announced that the club would be open for the reception of members on and after August 1. Bachelors were warned that under heavy penalties they were bound to assist at the daily conferences of the club. For greater convenience these conferences were to take place at table during dinner, and would continue during the evening, so as to allow the married members to be present. And in conclusion, the colonel respectfully informed the ladies that the rooms were open to them every evening, and that a part of the club had been specially reserved where they could discuss and arrange questions of general interest to them, such as luncheons and picnics, and lawn-tennis, croquet and dancing parties.

As they returned from the dharbar the colonel explained to the doctor what he proposed to do.

“We shall not be here very long,” said he, “and I am going to do my best to let everybody take away with them a pleasant remembrance of their short stay at Mahavellipore. I have had some experience with men, and with my countrymen in particular, and if I cannot keep them busy and make them amuse themselves all together, they will break up into cliques and quarrel among themselves, and the Armoudjan will become intolerable. All the men must cheerfully help me to keep the gaiety going, and then we shall have

harmony in our little republic. I reckon on your powerful influence, doctor, to do something towards this."

"I will give you all the help I can," said Holbeck, "but I am afraid you exaggerate my influence."

"Not at all, not at all," replied the colonel. "You have made a conquest of all the ladies. Mrs. Butnot herself said to me this morning, 'Your scientific man with the spectacles is a very nice fellow,' and for her that is something wonderful. She it is who gives the tone here. You know she is the sister of Sir Archibald Montrose, the Lieutenant-Governor of Rohilkand."

"Oh, indeed!" said Holbeck.

"Just so," the colonel went on. "But to return to our club. I have arranged it so that each member shall find some particular attraction for himself. In the first place, I have an excellent cook; that is a strong point. Then the reading-room is provided with all the papers in the peninsula, and the European periodicals and magazines. Then we have shikaris in attendance to guide those who are anxious to go out shooting against everything except the king of the tigers, and we are going to leave him alone for a fortnight. Tomorrow we are going to have a grand expedition against the buffaloes; then there is to be a cricket match; then we are to have a grand spread in the palace; then a monster picnic; and there is going to be a croquet meeting and a lawn-tennis tournament for the young people; a ball is being got up, &c., &c. What is to come after we shall see. It seems to me that if the fellows are not satisfied

with this programme, they are very difficult to please."

"So I should think," said Holbeck emphatically.

"I'll see you again this evening," said the colonel, as he left him. "We will begin our conferences, and study the grave problems in which we are interested."

As he entered the tent the doctor said to Everest,—

"You heard what the colonel said?"

"I did," said the young man. "It will give no time for anything else."

"Come, come, Everest, put a good face on your bad luck. A fortnight is soon over, and besides you can rejoice in all the prerogatives of the humility you pretend to. You were unhappy because you were rich and a lord; you are here the first poor man that has turned up, so you can be happy."

"Well, I have not much to complain of," said the young man, not, however, without a little bitterness. "Nobody bothers about me. Not one of the ladies has said a single word to me."

"Oh," said the doctor, with a smile, "we are never contented! But I thought I saw you talking very cheerfully to Miss Shaughnessy."

"I only exchanged a few words with the lady," said Everest, reddening slightly.

"Then you did wrong," said Holbeck; "I only chatted with her for an instant, and she gave me the impression of being a very charming girl, most intelligent and good-tempered."



“Have you fallen a victim, friend Holbeck?” asked Barbarou. “If I did not know that you were the very model of old bachelors, I should begin to think—”

“Yes, exactly,” said the doctor; “and I have vowed deep affection for this exceedingly nice young lady, not because she is good-looking and agreeable—that I care nothing about, but because she has shown such devotion for her old father, as I was telling you this morning.”

“What I like in the colonel’s plan,” said Barbarou, for whom sentimental matters had little interest, “are the conferences at the dinner-table. If a question worries you there, you can then pass on to something else. I can hardly talk except at table. I was once at an election meeting at Marseilles, and a lamp began to smoke just over my head. The smell was unbearable, and so I addressed an observation to the chairman. Thinking I was asking to speak, the people shoved me into the tribune. When I had got into the box, and found all eyes fixed on me, it made me feel so queer that I remained dumb. In vain the chairman cried, ‘Citizen Barbarou, please proceed!’ and the mob shouted, ‘Go on! say what you think!’ It would have been a very simple thing to have remarked, ‘Citizens, the third lamp on the right is smoking,’ but I could not manage it, and the indignant electors hustled me out of the tribune and bundled me out of the door.”

“Who knows?” said Holbeck; “if you had only opened your mouth, they might have elected you. On what a little hangs a man’s fate and a country’s destinies!”

When the evening came the three friends took their way to the club. Barbarou, suddenly seized with an intense thirst for elegance, had, without a murmur, mounted his black coat. "It is still rather tight," he said, "but it will do in time. I begin to feel a little freer in it."

The table was laid as luxuriously as on the evening before, but this time the ladies did not appear, and among the men only the bachelors had responded to the colonel's invitation. One exception there was to this, however, for little General Butnot had deserted his family by permission of Mrs. Butnot, who declared that she could get on very well without him. We might add that the excellent but diminutive sportsman, in spite of his lively affection for his old comrade Shaughnessy, had seen his promotion to the presidential chair with just a little jealousy, and thought he might at least have a share of his excessive influence.

The gathering the night before had broken the ice, and the sportsmen met as if they were old acquaintances. When the dessert was put on, the first "daily evening meeting" began.

"Gentlemen," said the president, "the moment has come for us to consider the grave subject in which we are all interested. Let us talk a little about the king of the tigers."

"Hear, hear!" came from all sides, and inattentive members were immediately brought to order.

"Gentlemen," continued the colonel, "the aim of your expedition is a very serious one, and we should prepare for it with great care. I think you will all agree with me when I explain my

reasons for our postponing matters for a little time. Allow me at the outset to say that I am certain that not a man here has been attracted hither by the temptation that such a prize would excite among the greedy. No, gentlemen, such an insinuation would be an insult to you. We are all of us impressed by the spectacle of these poor people holding out to us their suppliant arms, and we have come filled with noble ardour to accomplish a mission which I do not hesitate to describe as one of the highest philanthropy."

Renewed "Hear, hear!" from all sides of the table.

"Say you that we have come here in search of a vain glory?" continued the chairman. "I believe, sirs, that there is not one amongst us who has not distinguished himself in many encounters with the beasts of the jungle. On that point our reputation is made. A tiger-skin more or less is with us hardly worth while throwing in the scale. I should only have to say to the youngest of you, 'The Tigerslayers' Club has selected you; be off!' and alone on foot down into the jungle he would go with head erect and heart unshaken to confront the monster. But, sirs, our experience has shown us the absurdity of this foolish temerity which scorns advice and trusts to chance to assure success. We all of us know that tiger-hunting is no mere child's play, and that to earn the title of which we are so proud we must join to courage coolness, presence of mind, prudence, and a hundred other qualities.

"The adversary with whom we have to deal is no vulgar enemy. By his artfulness and cunning,

more than by his ferocity, he has well merited the name of 'King-of-the-tigers.' He has up to the present laughed at the efforts that have been made against him, and we must not hold our native fellow-sportsmen too cheap, and be too sure of success where they have failed. Twenty years ago, gentlemen, there was a case very similar to that of which we are now speaking. A man-eater pursued his ravages along the road from Mhow to Indore. Several English sportsmen tried to kill him, but succumbed in the strife, and it was a native shikhari who by a lucky chance carried off the victory. As for us, our honour is at stake, and we cannot leave Mahavellipore until the day that the skin of the king of the tigers is nailed to the door of our club."

Thunders of applause greeted this declaration.

"We should therefore approach our enemy with precaution, so as to reach the end we desire with honour and certainty. For if we wish to succeed, we must take care not to buy success by some sad sacrifice that would cast a gloom over our joyous meeting. With your approval, gentlemen, I will suggest a plan of attack. Shikaris should be sent out round the district so as to keep us informed of the movements of the king of the tigers, and when we are thoroughly acquainted with his habits and customs we can unite in our effort to annihilate him."

The colonel resumed his seat. The latter part of his discourse fell flat, and was not received with anything like the same enthusiasm as the beginning. Little Butnot, taking advantage of the evident coolness, arose.

"I should like," said he, "to ask the president what he means by a united effort. Are we to make a general attack? Are we to go into entrenchments?"

"We can adopt any way we choose," said the colonel, "according to circumstances. We may even appeal to individual initiative."

"For my part," continued Butnot, "I vote for that last motion. In fact, although I join in the words of eulogy which the president has addressed to our colleagues, I should not wonder if among our younger sportsmen there are some who are desirous of winning a handsome recompense at the same time as well as a glorious renown. I would suggest that after due reflection the club should designate one of its members who seems best fitted to attempt the adventure and sustain the general honour. The member could be chosen on his own proposal, and in the event of there being several competitors, we could choose one of them by lot."

"Agreed!" exclaimed everybody.

"This in no way prevents our gallant president from taking the prudent measures he spoke of, and which met with your approval," added Butnot, who wished as much as possible to mollify the check that he had just inflicted on his old friend.

Soon a general move was made from the table into the adjoining room, where coffee was served. The married members here joined their colleagues, and the discussion was resumed in detached groups. The young fellows laughingly and chaffingly surrounded Barbarou, who in most elegant terms narrated a few of his famous

exploits. Need we say that the incidents of the lion and the antelope and that of the elephant and paraffin lamp were received with great applause?

When the members entered the drawing-room Holbeck took Everest by the arm, and, in spite of a slight resistance on his part, drew him towards an angle of the room where the young ladies were seated round a table. Arriving opposite Miss Shaughnessy, he introduced his companion.

"Here is a young friend of mine," said he, "who has just been complaining of not having been introduced to our president's daughter. Mr. Everest, of"—he was about to say "Gros-more Castle," but he checked himself in time, and added "London."

"Mr. Everest has already honoured me by introducing himself," said the young lady with a gracious smile, "and we are almost old friends."

And with thoroughly English affability she held out her hand, which Everest shook respectfully, but not without a certain embarrassment.

"I am extremely glad to hear it," said Holbeck, astonished, and as he went off he muttered, "Ah, my lord, you have been deceiving your old mentor."





A large fire had been lighted.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE BUFFALO HUNT.

AN hour or two before daybreak, although the night was still dark, mysterious shadows began to move about the camp in the Armoudjan. They stopped in front of each tent and quietly awakened the servants, who, wrapped in their robes, were, according to custom, lying at full length before the doors.

“Din hane djate,” whispered the shadow, and the servant thus awakened answered, “Bhot-acha,” rose to his feet, and glided into the tent.

What was the meaning of these mysterious proceedings? Was a revolt in progress against the Europeans? Was there to be a renewal of the sanguinary tragedy of 1857? There is no occasion for alarm: the shadows were only the

shikaris telling the servants to wake up their masters, for the hour had come for them to start for the hunt; and in taking all these precautions they were only carrying out the orders of the colonel, who was anxious not to disturb the sleep of the ladies.

The first item of the colonel's programme was in preparation, the great buffalo hunt was to take place this very day.

One of the first to appear was the president of the Tigerslayers' Club himself, who began to superintend the execution of his orders, and passed from tent to tent to hurry on the lazy. Coming to Holbeck's, he lifted up the door and caught sight of our three friends, who had just finished dressing. Barbarou and Everest were filling their cartridge-bags and inspecting their arms, while the doctor was hanging over his shoulder a large zinc case painted a most lively green.

"Good morning, doctor," said the colonel, as he entered; "ready already? You set the young folks a good example. Have you your gun?"

"My gun!" exclaimed Holbeck, in an indignant tone; "I am contented with the panther; that will be enough for my sporting glories. My gun! There it is!" and he brandished his zinc box.

"Hum!" said the colonel; "I never used a weapon like that, but I am afraid it will not have much effect on a wild buffalo."

"You need not get excited, colonel," said Barbarou; "the doctor will find something to do. He has seen that we have got no white ants, and so he is going to bring back a cargo."



"As you please," said Shaughnessy, with a smile; "but be quick, we must be in the saddle in a minute or two. The horses are waiting outside the camp, for I wished to keep the noise away from the ladies."

They left the tent, followed by Latchman, who was going with the party.

At the garden gate a large fire had been lighted, and the horses, in charge of the servants, were awaiting the arrival of the hunters, who were soon mustered. A number of half-naked natives, carrying flaming torches, gave quite a picturesque effect to the meeting.

The sportsmen mounted, Holbeck bestrode his white mule, and, at a signal from the colonel, the troop, escorted by the torch-bearers, moved ahead at a gentle trot, so as to save the horses that were to play an important part in the coming chase.

Holbeck modestly kept to the rear, and by him rode his new friend Cunningham, who began conversation with,—

"You did well to come with us; the ride alone is worth all the trouble of getting up so early. We are going into one of the wildest parts of Gondvana."

"Have we far to go, then?" asked Holbeck.

"About nine miles, more or less; but we shall go over the Mahavellipore ridge, and on the other side we shall be in unexplored open country. It is only in such places that you can find buffalo nowadays, and Shaughnessy is rather proud at being able to begin operations with one of the most interesting sports in the Indian code."

"But are not buffaloes very rare?" asked

Holbeck. "I humbly confess that I was unaware that representatives of that bovine species were found in this country."

"The wild buffalo, *Bos bubalus*," said Dr. Cunningham, "is hardly met with in Asia, except in this part of Central India. He is much larger and stronger than his domestic congener, and has horns of immense size. He still roams about in herds between the Nirbada and the Godavari. You sometimes find him as far north as the Ganges, or even up to the Himalayas; but he has been driven back to the south by both European and native hunters. Hereabouts he has nothing to fear from the locals, who have only got spears and arrows, and very seldom care to face a formidable adversary. But he is not the only wild bull that haunts these regions. There is another interesting bovine representative—the Gaur, or *Gavæus gaurus*—whose fatty hump has given him the name of the Indian bison, although he has nothing to do with the real bison."

"What the Americans call a buffalo," observed Holbeck.

"Well," replied the surgeon-major, "the gaur is neither a bison nor a buffalo, he is not much more than a butcher's bull. However, I fancy that our worthy president will turn up a specimen or so in the hills."

Chatting gaily, the horsemen reached the base of the range bordering the valley and began to ascend the escarpment. As they reached the summit a feeble light spread over the country, announcing the approach of dawn. One by one the natives extinguished their torches.

As the day began the air became very cold.

"Hrrr!" said the doctor, with a shudder; "I am sorry I did not bring my overcoat."

"This sudden lowering of the temperature just before daybreak," said Cunningham, "is a phenomenon that has always struck me on these Central Indian plateaux. I cannot quite explain it."

"It probably coincides with the establishment of equilibrium in the atmosphere," said Holbeck. "The air, by radiation, which is always very free in the tropics, gradually parts with its heat; and if the night were longer we might see the thermometer fall before sunrise to some degrees below zero."

"That is so," said Cunningham. "These Indians, who are more observant than people think, have for centuries availed themselves of the phenomenon to obtain ice by the simple means of nocturnal radiation."

The sportsmen were now descending the slope of the ridge, away from Mahavellipore. Day was coming on rapidly, and already the jagged peaks of the mighty throne of Mahadeo were tinted by the light veil of cloud, which rapidly changed to purple, to change again as the sun's rays swept over the plain.

Girt by the mountains, with their rocky flanks seamed here and there by tufted woods, the plateau lay before them in all its savage grandeur of hill and prairie.

"As far as you can see," said the colonel, pointing out the panorama to Everest, who was riding by his side, "even if you were on top of



Came furiously charging up to Everest.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE HEROES OF THE DAY.

WHILE his colleagues were engaged with the food, the colonel settled the plan of campaign with the shikaris. Having received their orders, these latter hurried off to rejoin their comrades, who had been at their stations since the evening before.

The colonel went back into the tent.

"Gentlemen," said he, "some of us have already taken part in a hunt of this sort, and know its perils and difficulties. To those who have not done so I have only one bit of advice to offer, and that is not to stray far from their comrades, and, in case we separate, to do as the leader of their troop tells them. And now to horse!"

Again the horses were mounted, but as the start was made Holbeck was seen to leave his mule attached to a peg, and to march off on foot with his umbrella in his hand and his zinc box at his side.

"Hallo, doctor!" shouted Butnot, "are you going to leave us just as the fun is going to begin?"

"Not at all," said Holbeck, with a smile, "but my gallant mule does not seem to me sufficiently solid to withstand a reminder from a buffalo's horns, and my seat is not quite sure enough to enable me to perform as a picador. Latchman is going to take me up that hill you see to the right, and thence I can look on without tiring myself."

"Do you mean that little wood all by itself there on the flank of the hill?" asked the colonel.

"Yes," answered the doctor. One of the natives Latchman has been speaking to just now says that up there I shall find some enormous ant-hills." •

"The mystery is explained," said Barbarou, with a loud laugh. "You look after the ants, and we will look after the buffaloes."

"I wish you good luck, gentlemen," said the imperturbable naturalist, quietly opening his umbrella and walking off, while the noisy troop disappeared in a cloud of dust.

After half an hour's gallop, the colonel, at a sign from the chief huntsman, shouted "Halt!" and the twenty horsemen pulled up. Then, as the order was given, they took their stations right and left, so as to form a long line across the valley.

Some distance off were the buffaloes scattered over the plain, some browsing on the herbage, others stretched on the ground. Haribadada estimated them at about sixty.

A fresh signal was given, and the line advanced at a gallop. Each horseman carried his gun ready loaded at his right knee. The buffaloes were probably warned of the approach of the enemy by the beat of the horses' shoes on the hard ground. They rose hurriedly and disorderly, interrogated the air with their shining nostrils, uncertain to which side to fly, for their sight is not very keen, and their intelligence is but meagre.

The hunters were hardly a hundred yards off when the herd, realizing at last all the imminence of the danger, started in full flight up the valley. A shower of bullets rained on to them and changed their flight into a rout. But behind the herd three huge animals lay on the ground, which were surrounded and despatched.

The sportsmen, having reloaded their guns, were hurrying off in pursuit of the fugitives, when the colonel shouted,—

“Stop, gentlemen! There is no good in tiring your horses to no purpose. We shall catch the buffaloes in a trap the way they have gone, and, besides, you could never make sure of hitting them when they are going at that rate. You need not feel alarmed. In half an hour or so you will see them back again. The two hundred beaters that are round the head of the valley will send them down. But we must change our line of battle. We can never think of meeting the

charge of such heavy brutes, for they would smash up horses and men. By dividing into two parties and echelonning on each side of the valley we shall make them defile beneath our fire, and, the horses being rested, we can take up the pursuit."

The hunters divided according to the colonel's advice. He took charge of one of the troops, while General Butnot commanded the other. Each troop was scattered in vedettes about twenty yards apart, and waited events.

Half an hour had hardly elapsed when a distant rumbling announced the return of the herd. Soon the ground shook, and shouts of "Look out!" ran down the line of hunters as the buffaloes appeared.

The spectacle presented by the giant beasts was magnificent, as in one compact mass, mad with terror, with their huge horns pointed at the enemy, they came thundering down the valley. At the first few shots two or three bulls in the front rank were rolled over, and the herd was thrown into confusion. Some suddenly stopped, trembling and terrified, yielding themselves an easy prey to the guns, while others, seeing the horsemen, rushed towards them. Then the scene became exciting, and the hunted and the hunters fought in groups.

A cow with enormous horns, whose calf had been killed at her side, came furiously charging up to Everest, who was stationed just on the edge of the wood. The young man, with admirable coolness, allowed the buffalo to come almost up to him, and then fired point-blank. The bullet with

a dull thud struck the cow's forehead, and she, without stopping, gave her horns a shake and grazed Everest's arm as he leant back on his rearing horse, and, twisting round as on a pivot, rode off to reload.

Barbarou, who was close by, saw his friend's danger and gallantly hurried up to the rescue. Halting his horse to be sure of his aim, he fired, and the bullet struck home, as shown by the blood which gushed from the cow's black flank. But the wound did not stop her career, and on she came with her head straight down at the hunter, as if she had been stung.

The sailor had only time to seize the rein, as his horse, feeling the buffalo at his heels, dashed off at full speed.

There are many pleasanter things, even for an experienced rider, than to be on a horse with the bit between its teeth, and it may be guessed what were the sensations of Barbarou, who was not an experienced rider, when he found his horse racing along, not with one buffalo, but with twenty at his heels, for the rest of the herd were following the old cow.

Giving all false shame to the winds, Barbarou threw away his gun, and, seizing the mane, clung on in despair. At the sight a shout arose from the hunters, who were powerless to aid him, for the buffaloes were in the way, and to fire with him amongst them was too dangerous.

Their alarm was changed to agony when they saw the horse head towards the little wood, and leap out of sight. Behind him the whole of the herd disappeared into the thicket, tearing down



the branches and breaking down the trees which barred their progress. For a short time the sinister sounds of the living hurricane were heard from among the foliage as they gradually died off into silence.

“Barbarou is lost!” exclaimed Everest, urging his horse into the wood, followed by the other sportsmen. Notwithstanding the track cut by the beasts through the bushes, the trees were so torn and entangled that the men were obliged to dismount and leave their horses in charge of a shikari.

There was only too much cause to fear that Barbarou had been swept from his horse by some branch or other, and trodden under foot by his furious foes. In what state would they find his corpse? Probably as a mass of torn and bleeding flesh. What, then, was the astonishment—it might almost be said the stupefaction—of the hunters at the sight which greeted their eyes! The terrible cow lay dead in the centre of the wood, and, standing in front of her, Barbarou was quietly spanning the length of her horns!

As the men came up the sailor exclaimed, “There is a pair of horns for you! I never saw one like it. Over three yards from tip to tip! My dear colonel, I will keep them, and I think I have earned them.”

“Certainly, my dear sir,” said the colonel; “but perhaps you will explain by what miracle you escaped the death which to us appeared inevitable. We expected to find you annihilated by the buffaloes.”

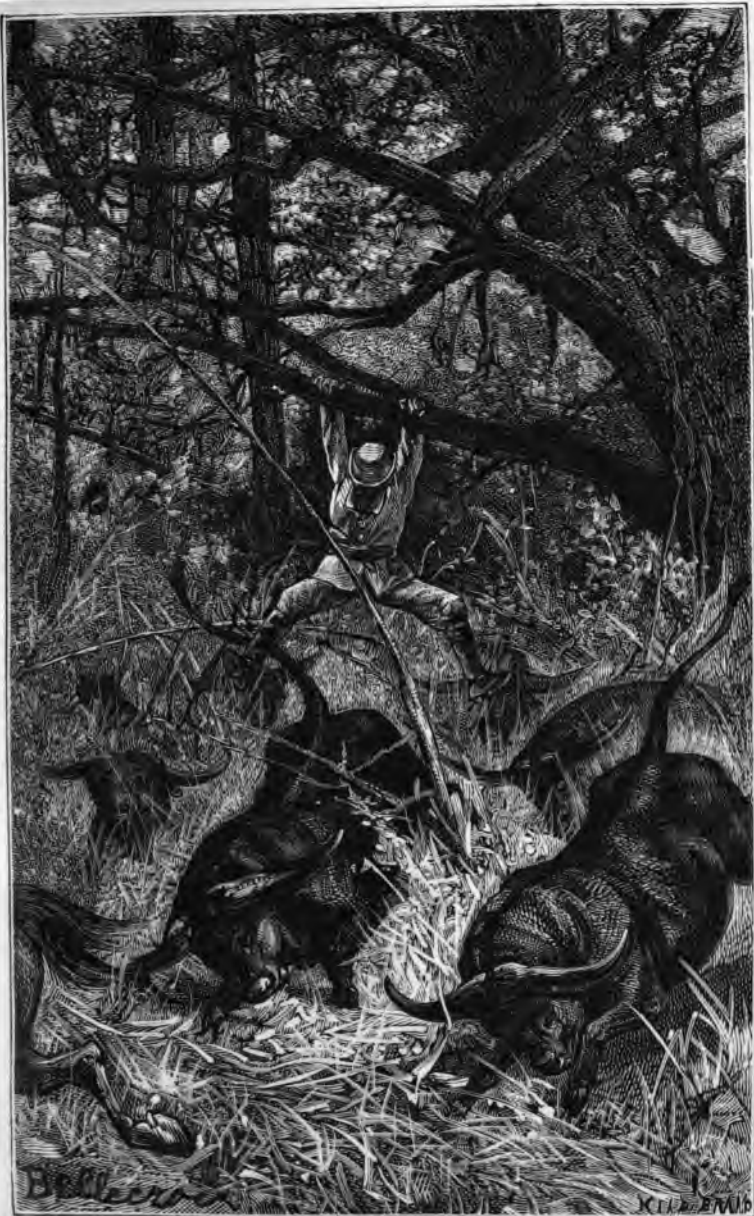
“Did you now?” said Barbarou, in a tone of

triumphant simplicity. "What I did was very easy. I should tell you that I have been in the French navy; that will explain why I am not much of a horseman, and throw a light on what follows. When I saw that horse steer for the wood I said to myself, 'Keep your eyes open, or you will get your head smashed against some tree, if you don't get tumbled off on to the ground, to be trod upon by all these horned gentry that are behind you.' So I kept myself ready, and at the first branch I saw coming to smash my head I threw up my arms, opened my legs, and jumped into the tree, while my steed sped on like a mad thing, and the herd roared past beneath me without raising a head. When they had all gone I got down and caught sight of this huge brute, which had come to die of the bullet I had given it. As for the horse, I know it well. It will never be fool enough to let the buffaloes catch it, and I feel sure we shall see it again as soon as we reach the rendezvous."

The shikaris, who had followed, were busy now in quartering the dead buffalo, and lifted the head with its immense trophy.

"I think, gentlemen," said the colonel, "that we ought to be satisfied with the day's results. Eleven buffaloes have been killed, without counting the fine beast slain in such a dramatic fashion by our friend, and which was probably the chief—the queen of the herd. Mr. Barbarou would certainly seem to be the hero of this memorable expedition. Now let us return to the maharajah's tent, where a comfortable lunch awaits us."

They were coming out from under the trees



"I threw up my arms, opened my legs, and jumped into the tree."

Page 226.

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when Latchman ran up to Everest. "Is the doctor with you?" asked he, apparently much alarmed.

"No," answered Everest. "But why?"

"Mr. Holbeck," continued the khitmatgar, "came into this wood with me, and began to gather some of the plants and pick up the little animals and put them into his green box, as he usually does. That did not amuse me at all, and I was eager to see the hunt, for I heard the reports of the guns. The doctor, seeing my impatience, said to me, very kindly, 'Go, my friend; go, I do not want you.' I came out of the wood, and sat down on a hillock where I could see all that was going on. I saw the return of the buffaloes and the firing, but what was my horror when I suddenly saw Mr. Barbarou come up to this side, and, followed by the herd, charge into the wood exactly where I had left my master!"

"What!" exclaimed Everest; "was the doctor there?"

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, "he was right in the line of route taken by the herd."

"We must find him," said Everest. "I shall never be happy if anything has happened to him."

Hurriedly he rode back into the wood, followed by Barbarou, the colonel, and some of the others. In vain they searched all through it, there was no trace of the doctor.

"My brother medico," said Cunningham, "has gone back to the tent while we are hunting for him here. If he had got in the way of the buffaloes he would not have disappeared altogether."

We should at least find some trace of his famous vasculum."

"Hush!" said Butnot, raising his gun. "I saw something move over there at the base of that fig-tree. I am sure it is a bear eating the ants."

And the little man brought his gun up to the shoulder, and was aiming at a dark mass that was crouching on the ground, when Barbarou knocked up the barrel with his hand, and exclaimed,—

"Hold hard, general! that bear is our friend Holbeck. You had only got to mention ants for me to recognize him."

"Holbeck!" exclaimed the hunter; "what is he doing there?"

They approached with caution, and noiselessly, and soon were beside the doctor, who, half buried in a hole which almost concealed him, seemed extremely busy. Armed with a magnifying-glass, he was examining in a sort of ecstasy the tiny moving dots that he was picking out of the hole. Suddenly he raised his head and perceived the colonel.

"Ah! my dear friend!" said he, quite radiant with delight. "It is admirable! I have just made a discovery which will crown all my labours. Just fancy! In this ant-hill most providentially dug up by some large animal I have found an Aculeate, not unlike *Cryptocerus atratus*, only that his sting is not venomous, and only produces a slight smart. It is admirable!"

"And the buffaloes?" asked the colonel.

"What do you say?" asked Holbeck.

"I was speaking about a herd of buffaloes

which rushed past here like an avalanche, and whose traces have ploughed up the ground all round you."

"The buffaloes?" said the doctor, as if waking from a dream. "I did not see them. Ah! but wait—you are right; I did hear a great noise all round me a little while ago, but I was busy counting the rings in the corslet of my *Cryptocerus*."

"Oh, indeed," said Butnot, astounded at such coolness.

"Well, it is admirable!" exclaimed the colonel. "More admirable than all the extraordinary feats of this day; and I propose that the story you have just told us should be inscribed in letters of gold in the annals of the Tigerslayers' Club; they will not contain anything much more surprising."

The doctor was dragged out of his hole and, much to his regret, borne far away from his beloved *Cryptocerus*, with which, however, he had nearly filled his famous green box.





“ He heard the bell jingle on his chest.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE REHABILITATION OF THE TIGER.

IN the evening, at the table of the Tigerslayers' Club, the conversation was monopolized by the events of the day.

Holbeck and Barbarou were undeniably its heroes, but if nobody sought to eclipse their glory, every one had some thrilling or amusing adventure to relate, for the contest at the last moment had been very exciting.

Captain Beynon had had his horse gored, and, rolling on to the ground with his mount, would have been tossed by an infuriated bull, had it not been shot dead on the spot by the Rev. Mr. Shortbody, who, notwithstanding his peaceful profession, was one of the best marksmen in the camp.



The superb Chief-District-Magistrate Peernose had by a sudden movement dropped his double eyeglass and shot a calf which he had mistaken for a redoubtable bull. He had chased it with ardour, and assassinated the poor animal by firing at it point-blank, an exploit quite unworthy of a serious sportsman, and which only his short-sightedness could excuse.

Much more lamentable had been the adventure of Assistant Deputy-Commissioner Whatafter. Like Barbarou, his horse had run away and borne him far from the scene of action, but, less happy than the sailor, it had thrown him off into a muddy swamp, whence he was dragged out in a most deplorable condition. As he was a philosopher he was soon consoled for his misadventure, but it is to be feared that his poetical wife took some time to forgive him.

To sum up, there had been no serious accident, and the escaped horses had of themselves come back to the camp.

"Gentlemen," said Butnot, at the close of the dinner, "I beg to apologize publicly to our learned friend, Dr. Holbeck, for having mistaken him this morning for a bear. We ought to know that, far from being a bear, our excellent colleague is the pleasantest and jolliest companion it would be possible to meet in a day's march."

Loud and prolonged applause greeted this declaration.

"Now I have expressed my appreciation of his personal character," continued the general, "I am free to confess that any other sportsman in my place would have made the same mistake.

Which of you does not know that Master Bruin is a great authority on ants, and that to regale himself at his ease on their larvæ he digs into and destroys every ant-hill that comes in his way? Many a time have I noted this in the hills about Nagpore, where bears are very numerous. I have often surprised and had a shot at a bear engaged in that occupation. Perhaps if I were to tell you of a little affair that happened to me, if—”

A loud shout of “Go on, general! we are listening,” was the answer to his hesitation.

“Well, last year,” continued Butnot, “after I had inspected the garrison at Palamao I took advantage of being in the neighbourhood to get into the hills about Sirgondja, where I had heard there were a great many bears. In fact I killed eight in the first four days. I had with me two shikaris from the tribe of Larkas, who were about the steadiest and bravest fellows I ever went out with. When they found a bear they had no hesitation about irritating him and making him give them chase, so that I could have an easy aim. And with this they seemed to have a sight or a scent which enabled them to find an animal among the densest of thickets.

“One day we were going up a nullah crowded with boulders and bushes when one of them touched my arm and whispered, ‘Bear!’ pointing to a spot comparatively near me. For some time I could see nothing, and then I caught sight of a dark mass half hidden in a deep hole. The bear, surfeited with ants and their larvæ, was asleep in his larder. I raised my gun and was going to fire, although I felt the repugnance that

a sportsman always feels at killing a defenceless enemy, when one of the Larkas said, 'Sahib, leave him to us!'

"As he said so he drew forth a leather thong, from which hung one of those long bells that the natives attach to their beasts, and which they keep tied up with rag to prevent its sounding on the march. Having thus armed himself, he said a few words in a low voice to his companion, and, leaping into the nullah, glided off towards the sleeping bear. What new folly were they going to try? At all events, I held myself ready.

"Suddenly I saw them jump on to the bear and hold him down in the hole by main force. It was not an easy thing to do, and long growls testified to the displeasure of the bear at being so roughly roused. Then the two Larkas jumped off quickly and the bear arose, and I saw what they had been up to. Master Bruin was wearing round his neck the bell that I had seen in the man's hand.

"You should have seen the grimace which the bear made when at the first movement he heard the bell jingle on his chest—you should have seen the jumps, the capers that he indulged in! His flights, his stops, his starts, such are beyond my powers of description. I shouted with laughter, and I had neither the thought nor the strength to put an end to the scene. The enraged bear fled through the woods, filling the air with the sounds of his bell. In two days he was heard of two hundred miles away, and returned to die of fright and exhaustion not far from the village where I was encamped."

This recital was received with great applause, but on such subjects everybody had something to say, and so Butnot had hardly finished when the president took up the running.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I should say that it has very seldom happened in any country for such a number of sportsmen to meet together as here. I say nothing of your gallantry in the field, but considering the varied districts in which you have distinguished yourselves—northern, southern, and central—I think it would give us all a good deal of pleasure if we were each to relate a few of our experiences in the chase. If one of our younger members were to publish these adventures the book would form a very valuable souvenir of the conferences of the Tigerslayers' Club."

"I have very great pleasure in seconding that," said Holbeck. "I am much interested in such matters; although I know very little about them, I never miss an opportunity of acquiring information. As I have only a humble panther to my credit, I shall be glad to hear my comrades, the tiger-slayers, say something about their interviews with the great felidæ. Besides, the accounts will be of great value to those who are thinking of going out after the King-of-the-tigers. They will profit by the experience in which we shall all share."

"Gentlemen," said the president, "to put the idea into working order this evening, I will call on our honourable colleague, General Butnot, for, although he has only been entertaining us hitherto with his friends the bears, every man in India

knows that there lives not a more successful tiger-slayer than the gallant general."

"Your turn, Butnot!" shouted the members.

"Gentlemen," said the general, as he rose, "I accept your gracious invitation. But I am no orator, and you must allow me to tell my story in simple sporting language. In my opinion it is much easier to kill a tiger than to talk of how it is done. And now let me say a few words in favour of our friend the tiger. Yes, gentlemen, I hope to show you that with very rare exceptions the tiger is a useful animal, I might almost say an indispensable one. When I say indispensable I should like all those that I see around me to think for a moment what our existence would be like if it were not for the tiger. He it is who alone affords a distraction to the gloomy routine life of the garrison, and I say boldly that if the tiger did not exist, we should have to invent him to prevent the whole of our civil and military functionaries sinking into a state of imbecility!"

A long salvo of applause interrupted the general in his painfully humorous exordium.

"But I see the eyes of our scientific friend turned towards me with a look of reproach. The estimable Dr. Holbeck, philanthropist-like, seems to say that the service rendered to the British officer by the tiger is somewhat open to discussion, while the damage inflicted by the tiger on the natives is undeniable. I hear him already quoting from the lamented Forsyth, who estimated that every tiger killed was responsible for from fifty to seventy head of cattle per annum, or

without deigning to eat him. Ask the drover and the shepherds, they will tell you that they never hesitate to rush up to a tiger who is attacking their charges, and that their cries and threats are always enough to drive off the jungle king.

“And now let us say something for the man-eater. Here is a gallant tiger, who for many years has been relieving the villagers of their useless beasts. What recompense does he receive for his services? Insults and injuries and a selection of bullets! At length age comes on him. He gets the rheumatics, his muscles ankylose. It is with difficulty that he can bring down a bull and carry it off in his jaws to his dining-room. The time comes when even a tottering old cow can resist him. At last he can stand it no longer, and, all of a tremble, he approaches the formidable-looking man, and asks him for charity. To his surprise he beholds the superb monarch of creation fall to the ground at his approach, and obligingly offer him his neck without the faintest attempt at a struggle. The tiger throttles him, discovers that he is remarkably good eating, and resolves to make a fresh start, but as his cowardice continues, notwithstanding his unhopèd-for success, he devotes himself at first to the consumption of old women and young children, and it is not until some time has elapsed that the supper of his declining years is furnished by full-grown man. The tiger only becomes a criminal by necessity. That is why I say to you, ‘Down with the murderer! Wage against him relentless war, for he is the enemy of the human race; but

do not exterminate the tribe to which he belongs.' Gentlemen, may we never see the day when the much calumniated tiger disappears from the fauna of India!"

"Three cheers for the general!" shouted the assembly.

"That," said Holbeck, "is what I call the complete rehabilitation of the tiger. It would make a most capital paper for the Animals' Protection Society."

"Be it clearly understood," continued the general, "that it is far from my thoughts to condemn the pursuit of the tiger, which I look upon as the noblest of sports. But I contend that at the same time our adversary merits our respect and esteem; and since you ask me for one of my adventures, I will give you one of which the hero was a noble fellow who died regretted by all who had known him.

"About nine years ago I was on service in Madras, and having taken up my quarters at Hebsore, I there relieved the country of a man-eating tigress that was ravaging the villages round. After this exploit, which brought me a good deal of reputation, I heard of a tiger to whom the natives had given the name of Bahadour, on account of his immense stature and imposing demeanour. This tiger was positively the favourite of the whole country. He was the mildest and most inoffensive animal that I ever saw, he never in the least molested the smallest child. But to make up for it he was a great lover of beef. He adored a beefsteak, and he liked it good, and enough of it. There was no mistake

about that. He knew the customs of each herd, quietly waited for their return to the village at night, selected a bull to his taste, and, without unnecessary hurry, trotted off with it to the jungle and devoured it at his ease. Even in his depredations he was most thoughtful, and levied his tribute in succession from each of the villages which constituted his royal domain with an impartiality that prevented all complaint. Once only had he done harm to a villager, and that was almost in spite of himself, for, finding himself surrounded in error by a lot of wood-cutters, he had upset a man in jumping over his head, and if the unlucky fellow died, that was not entirely the fault of the tiger.

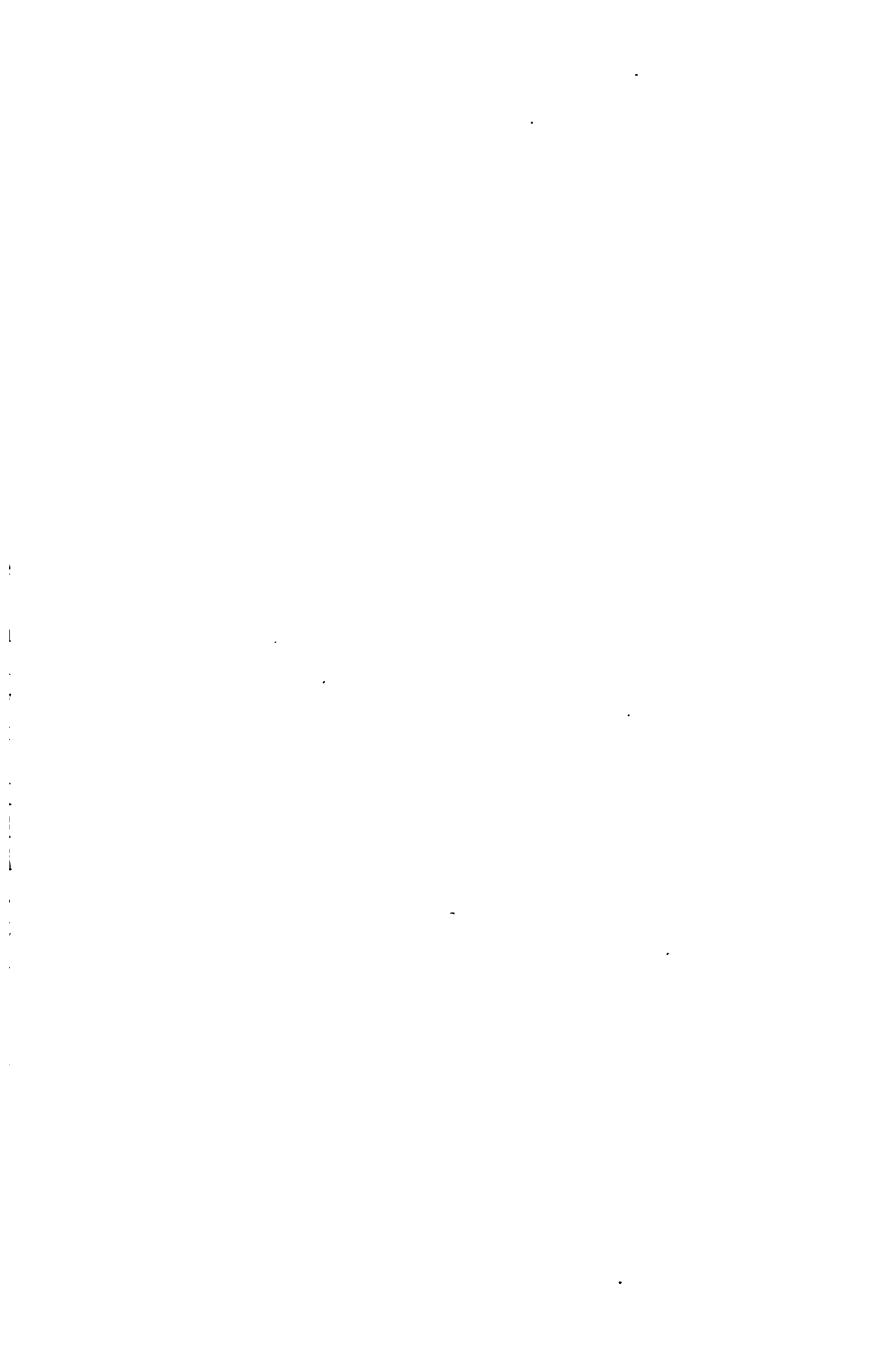
“The peasants had ended by looking upon Bahadour as a sort of demigod, and having even erected an effigy of him in the village temple, they had persuaded themselves that no human bullet would ever reach him.

“That rather ruffled my self-conceit, and I declared war on the superb Bahadour. It would take me hours to relate all my unsuccessful attempts to triumph over this wonderful tiger. All I tried miserably failed. I chose the best beaters, organized the best hiding-places, passed night after night in trees—all to no purpose.

“Every time I came back to camp I saw the footprints of the artful Bahadour on the ground round my tent. The brute was laughing at me. I grew wild with vexation.

“At length one day a frightful storm raged in the jungle. The cattle dispersed, frightened at the thunder, strayed off, and Bahadour made a







"Suddenly I saw Bahadour glide into the water, to cross to the other side."

huge hecatomb. The next morning I heard that the tiger had been seen not very far off asleep on a heap of dead cattle that he had accumulated. I immediately collected the beaters, and, mounting my old hunting elephant, started off in all haste towards the spot in question.

"The beaters soon began operations. The men advanced slowly and fearlessly, beating the bushes with their sticks. I kept by the bank of a stream which formed a sort of clearing in the wood. Suddenly I saw Bahadour glide into the water to cross to the other side. I was surprised to see him so near to me. I fired too quickly, and I missed him. At the report of the gun the tiger sprang away up the bank, and I thought we had lost him. But even as we followed his trail we found that he was slowing down. Bahadour had probably no idea that he would be so interfered with. He had dined heartily the night before, and the hundred or two pounds of beef he had stowed away was rather against his running far.

"Soon the beaters pointed out the place where he was, and, leaving my elephant and sending him away, I climbed up a tree which I thought would command his road. In fact, I had scarcely settled myself before Bahadour appeared. He seemed to me then to be very big, for I had never before had a good look at him. His good cheer had made him fat and heavy, and as he jogged along he puffed noisily. He seemed in no way suspicious, and thought that we had gone off. The idea never occurred to him to look up at his enemy, who had him in range and was covering

him completely. As he came nearer I let go my right barrel and shot him in the neck, and then with my left I planted one in his back. He uttered a terrible growl and rolled over, beating the air with his talons; but suddenly he got up and disappeared in the jungle. My beaters followed at his heels, and twice he looked as though he would charge them, but at last he slunk into the bushes, and, night arriving, I had to abandon him.

"The next morning I mounted my elephant and went in search of the tiger. He had moved some distance since the evening, and it was only after a long search that we discovered him. He was lying, tired out, in the centre of a small clearing. Hearing us approach, he lifted his head and looked at us, giving a hoarse growl as he did so, but he never attempted to get up, and I finished him.

"That was the end of the famous tiger. It was with some pity that I contemplated the legendary hero stretched at my feet. Said the natives near me, 'He never did us harm.' And, in fact, Bahadour died as he had lived. Even in the heat of the fight he never attempted to molest one of his old friends. Shall I confess it? At the moment I would have given anything to have restored him to life, and it seemed to me that in slaying Bahadour I had killed the brutal but benevolent genii of the jungle."



A garden party.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### MORE TIGER STORIES.

THE little general's narrative was received with signs of enthusiastic approval, and the members, rising from the table, adjourned with a good deal of noise to the coffee-room, which opened on to the garden.

"What seems to me so extraordinary about this is," said Holbeck to Everest, "that such exploits have been performed by such an almost microscopic little man, who, in spite of his long beard and soldierly carriage, is as meek as a lamb. Don't you think Butnot exaggerates a little?"

"I believe that what the gallant general says is the simple fact," answered Everest, very seriously. "Englishmen have many faults, but

it is as well to remember that they hate the least travesty of the truth."

"You speak up for your own side," said Holbeck, with a smile, "but you must admit that a sportsman, whether born on the Thames or the Seine, would hardly be a sportsman if he did not go in for a little decoration."

The servants moved among the groups with their salvers, and handed round cups of deliciously aromatic Mocha. Soon cigars were lighted up, and long spiral wreaths of light-blue smoke began to ascend from all sides. The members had made themselves comfortable in the arm-chairs, and the circle was re-formed. Excited by the general's story, the company thirsted after fresh adventures.

And the Rev. Mr. Shortbody, having obtained an audience, began as follows:—

"Gentlemen, after the humorous special pleading of our eminent colleague, General Butnot, in the tiger's favour, I have some hesitation in following him. How dare I attack an animal which our friend has just sketched in such attractive colours? However, I am only doing what I conceive to be my duty when I declare that in my eyes the tiger is a cruel, hateful, cowardly monster, that we should all do our best to extirpate. I am really not aware what may be the fate in reserve for the unhappy English officials when that result has been attained, and I do not now ask if their leisure might not be much better employed in the moral elevation of the peoples placed under their charge; for the question is unfortunately too distant to necessitate its dis-

cussion. But what I deny is the utility, small as you may think it, of such a rascally animal as the tiger. So far from agreeing with our friend Butnot, I assert that we deserve blame, that after a century of domination we have not rid the country of such a plague. It is for this reason that I have become a member of your club, for I hold that any honest man who feels in his heart the courage required to face the fiercest of monsters should, in this country, range himself under the noble and philanthropic banner of the Tiger-slayers."

"Hear, hear!" said the assembly.

"Of course, gentlemen," said Shortbody, "I am one of those who believe that no part of this admirable creation is without its uses. The tiger, like other animals, has played an important part in the life-history of the globe. But in the nineteenth century, in this era of civilization, that part is played out, and it is for us, once for all, to put a stop to it. Once upon a time, as geological evidence proves, the tiger infested the land of Britain. Do we regret that the efforts of its primitive inhabitants succeeded in driving him out of it. With his prodigious muscular strength the tiger remains a souvenir of the prehistoric fauna. He should rejoin the fantastic monsters destroyed as much by human influence as by natural causes.

"The tiger, gentlemen, is the most cowardly of animals. He only attacks the feeble, and no matter how fierce he may be, he always trembles before the firm, straightforward look of man. Even the terrible man-eaters only choose for their prey the feeble women and natives palsied with

fear. Over and over again have these redoubtable tigers been seen to leave their victims and fly for their lives from a child armed with a stick. The instinct of the man-eater will always lead him to retreat before the European hunter that shows a bold front.

"Last year I was at Nassik, in the Dekkan, and heard that a man-eater was pursuing his depredations in the neighbourhood, and that he so completely barred the road to Palmit that no native dared to venture along it. Innumerable had been his victims, and the terror was great, and I had some difficulty in finding men to guide me to the tiger's haunt when I promised them to rid the country of his presence. At last two shikaris, who had often accompanied me on similar occasions, plucked up confidence, and consented to be my guides.

"As we entered the wood, I placed my two shikaris in front, so as to hide me. In this order we advanced with much caution. I held my double rifle at the ready in case the brute should attack us on the flank, but I knew that this he very rarely did. And, in fact, when we had gone about a couple of hundred yards I saw, some twenty yards in front of me, the tiger come out of his thicket and block the road. He was in no hurry. Sure that his prey could not escape him, he seemed to choose his victim. Superb in his brutal magnificence, he crouched down, and, with his look, threw a fascinating spell over the shikaris. As we had agreed, the two trembling men, at a given sign, cleared off, and left me face to face with him. With my gun at my thigh, ready to fire, I



fixed my eyes on the monster. I cannot describe to you the really magnetic effect which my look produced on him. A deep fear, a sort of stupefaction, rose into his savage face, and as I shouldered the gun and made a step forward, he lay down, crushed, on the ground, and, turning his head, looked as though he was about to flee into the jungle. The movement was his destruction. I saw his exposed shoulder, fired, and the brute rolled on the ground, but at a bound he was up again, and, fear giving him courage, he faced me once more. My second shot failed to stop him, and he came on at a rapid rate, but I seized the gun offered by one of the shikaris, and stretched the tiger lifeless on the ground. And so you see that this redoubtable monster, who in one year had walked off with fifty victims, shamefully fled before the look of a man who had dared to use his eyes."

Great applause greeted Shortbody as he resumed his seat.

"Gentlemen," said the timid Whatafter, as he rose to follow, "I hardly like to give an opinion in the debate which our colleagues, Butnot and Shortbody, have so brilliantly opened, famous tiger-slayers as they are. In my opinion tiger-hunting is the noblest of the sports, and without it our existence at the out-stations would be terribly monotonous. In that I share the opinion of my friend Butnot. As to the cowardice of the tiger, I have frequently noticed it, as our friend Shortbody has done, and it is this very cowardice that surrounds our philanthropic mission with such danger, for our enemy not only brings into play

his ferocity against us, but he adds to it his cunning and his hate, and baffles our courage by taking us unawares.

“But it is not only in the face of man that the tiger shows the cowardice of his heart. One other enemy, a very modest one, however, makes him tremble, and that is the wild dog, the *Cuon rutilans* of our naturalists. This animal, which is principally met with in the Central Provinces, is about the size of the ordinary dog. He goes in packs of some ten to a dozen, and with consummate ability gives chase to all the frequenters of the jungle, including even the tiger. I have myself on several occasions seen such packs pursuing the tiger, and he was shamefully running away from them, and I know on very good authority that such pursuits always end in the death of the hunted. It is a strange fact that the jackals, in spite of their formidable numbers, never attack the tiger.

“I was once out tiger-shooting near Dumoh, and was passing the night perched up in a tree near the carcass of a buffalo which had been dragged there the night before by one of these giant cats. As it was bright moonlight I kept myself carefully hidden among the leaves. I had been in my position about an hour, when I saw two jackals come into the clearing in which lay the buffalo. With great precaution they sidled up to the carcass, dancing round it in the most comical fashion, and then scurried off, as if panic-stricken, to come back immediately afterwards. At last one of them threw himself on the buffalo, and began to tear it with his teeth, while the other stood by as a sentinel with his nose to the wind

and his ears erect, and took no part in the feast. Suddenly the sentinel gave a jump, and stuck up his back in such a way that I thought the tiger was coming. But a moment afterwards I saw a third jackal appear, and after creeping up very cautiously, and going a long way round, he attacked the carcass, notwithstanding the sentinel's growls.

"In about half an hour the jackals continued their feasting, and then I saw them hurriedly get up and run backwards and forwards in a very agitated way, all the time keeping their eyes fixed on the same point just behind the tree I was up. This time I was sure that they had seen the tiger; but, afraid of making a noise, I dare not turn round, and there I remained for some time in quite a fever of expectation. Suddenly the jackals began molrowing gently, as if to present their compliments or excuses to the jungle-king, and then they slowly beat a retreat down the clearing. As they were doing so, I heard the heavy step of the tiger, and just beneath me there came into view his large head and striped shoulders. He came on without suspecting anything, and kept his eyes on the grimacing jackals. When he had reached the carcass he stopped, turned broadside on, and I fired. With a hoarse growl, and before I could give him a second shot, he sprang out of the clearing, and I heard him run for a moment or two, and then fall heavily among the bushes. I waited a little time, and then got down out of the tree and called my shikaris, and we soon found the tiger stone dead. Thanks to the jackals, I had been able to kill him with a single bullet, which, as far as I know, is rather a rare occurrence."

Whatafter's story was received with discreet

murmurs of approbation, and these had scarcely died out when Dr. Cunningham broke silence with,—

“Gentlemen, as it is getting late, I will not detain you long. The case mentioned by What-after is certainly of rare occurrence. I know very few men who can boast of having rolled over a tiger at a single shot. I never have had the luck to do so. I should say that, more than any other of the *felidæ*, the tiger takes a long time to die, and you might almost reverse the proverb and say that a quarter of an hour after death he is still alive. In fact we often see the tiger do things for some seconds which would be impossible had the muscles which cause them been really smashed up and destroyed by the projectile. As an illustration of this, I will tell you of a very dramatic and sorrowful affair of which I was the helpless spectator.

“A few years ago I was in garrison at Nassirabad, in Rajputana, and I was spending all my spare time in the Aravali hills, where there is game of every sort and description. I had as my inseparable companions two brother officers—Captain Burr, an accomplished sportsman, and a Lieutenant Wilmot, who was a young fellow, quite a novice, but very promising.

“One day we heard of a very large tiger, who was playing havoc with the cattle of the Thakoor of Dabla. The hill close to this village had no trees on it, thus it was impossible to get into hiding there, and so we had to go after the tiger in the daytime with beaters, and, as the bushes were rather thick, the attempt promised to be rather dangerous.





Wilmot had had the pluck and strength to draw his revolver.

"This being the case, I at first refused to let Wilmot come with us, but I yielded to his urgent request, and we three set off.

"I took a few shikaris that I had chosen with some care, and of whom I felt sure, and at first everything went well. The tiger was brought under fire in a most favourable way, and as soon as we spotted him we rolled him over with three bullets in quite a regular manner. I was stepping up to give him his final, when the brute made a last effort and disappeared in the bushes, taking with him a fourth bullet, which struck him on his hind-leg. It was evident that the last wound would prevent him going very far, and I mustered the beaters, and we started in search of him.

"You know, gentlemen, that this is the most dangerous part of a tiger-chase, and that you cannot act too warily. We advanced, then, with great care, and beating all the bushes, when I suddenly saw that Wilmot had remained behind. I was astounded at his recklessness, but it was not my fault. At the same moment that I missed him we heard a fearful shout from the middle of a thicket about twenty paces off, immediately followed by several shots. I ran up, trembling with excitement, and nearly fainted at what I saw.

"The tiger had seized Wilmot as he passed, and dug his teeth into the unfortunate fellow's right side. Wilmot had had the pluck and strength to draw his revolver from his belt, and fired the six chambers point blank at the tiger's head. And yet the brute, blinded with blood, with his head smashed into pieces, never let go his hold, and

continued to shake his victim as a cat does a mouse. Mad with rage, we fired into the tiger's body, and he then let go his hold, and Wilmot was free. Notwithstanding his terrible wounds, Wilmot raised himself up, and, saying to me, 'It was all my fault, Cunningham,' fell back dead. He was only one-and-twenty."

The doctor resumed his seat, his audience having been much affected at his story.

"Gentlemen," said the president, "all honour to the heroes who give their lives for a cause of which none can deny the philanthropic character. In attacking these tigers, in pursuing them in their haunts, we are not giving ourselves over to a vain and futile distraction, we are not only rendering a service to popular fears, but we are teaching the natives to respect the European race which has brought them the benefits of a higher civilization. Before this conference closes, and we join the ladies, who are protesting against our having abandoned them, I have a word to say which will be of special interest to you.

"It is a fact well known to all of you that a powerful tiger will clear the country over which he ranges of all his rivals. So it has been in Mahavellipore, and since the appearance of the King-of-the-tigers all his congeners seem to have flown. On the other hand, as if in confession of our superior prowess, our adversary himself has now gone. According to the latest news, it is not known what has become of him, and the shikaris seem to fancy that he has taken refuge behind the Nirbada. If that is confirmed, we shall be obliged to declare this Tigerslayers' Club to be permanent



until the Bagh Rajah has been found and executed. And now, gentlemen, this meeting is adjourned."

The colonel quitted his seat, and the sportsmen, old and young, moved into the drawing-room, where the ladies had already assembled.

Miss Shaughnessy ran up to her father, and in her most bewitching manner said to him, "Mr. President, I beg to offer you the lamentations of my companions. We were to have dancing this evening as a little practice before the ball announced in your programme. But you have kept our dancing partners at your interminable conference, and it is now ten o'clock, and Mrs. Peernose says it is too late; and besides, we suppose that the gentlemen will be too tired after their long day's buffalo-hunting."

"Too tired, Miss Impertinence?" said the colonel, with an air of pretended anger; "know that the members of the Tigerslayers' Club are never tired!"

"Particularly," said Holbeck gallantly, "when they are asked to comply with the wishes of their charming colleagues."

"Well, dear doctor," said the young lady, putting her arm in that of the naturalist, "I will take you at your word. I expect you to open the ball with me."

"With you?" exclaimed Holbeck, with a comical look of alarm; "but you cannot be thinking of what you are saying. I never danced in my life; I do not know how to dance."

"Oh, only a quadrille. Everybody knows how to dance a quadrille. And you are not going to refuse to set such a good example?"

At the colonel's order, the palace band, which was always in readiness in case the club should require its services, now struck up, and its enlivening strains echoed through the pavilion. In a few moments the tables and chairs were cleared away from the centre of the saloon, the mammas arranged themselves round the room, and the gentlemen came forward to choose their partners.

In spite of his entreaties, Holbeck was obliged, for the first time in his life, to face the inextricable perplexities of a quadrille, and we may say at once that he demeaned himself with as much ability as if he were an old diplomatist accustomed to figure on the waxed floors of the courts of royalty.

However, he had to excuse himself from the final galop, his little legs refusing to keep up with the impetuous speed of his fellow-dancers. Escaping from the crowd, he took refuge with Mrs. Shortbody, with whom he was a particular favourite.

"What do you think of that?" said he to that amiable lady, as he sank almost out of breath on a chair. "That little serpent, Miss Mary Shaughnessy, obliged an old man like me to go through all those figurings and caperings."

"You are rather worried, my dear doctor," said Mrs. Shortbody, "but you must forgive Mary her little bit of fun."

"Forgive her?" said the doctor, sending his gold spectacles up on to his forehead with a jerk. "Of course I forgive her. You see, my dear madam, I consider Miss Shaughnessy to be one of the most amiable young ladies it would be possible to meet."

"You are right," said Mrs. Shortbody. "I have taken a great deal of notice of her, and every day I see some new thing to admire in her."

Once started on this theme the good doctor could not stop himself, for we know with what admiration the daughter of his friend Shaughnessy had inspired him, and so he spent some considerable time with Mrs. Shortbody, delightedly listening to all the good lady told him concerning Mary, whom she had known from infancy, having been a friend of her mother.

While this was going on, the dance suggested by the president's daughter continued with such enthusiasm that no one would have supposed that the dancers had spent the day in the saddle.

Barbarou, now broken in to all the refinements of the best society, demeaned himself with as much ease as if his coat had been made for him. In truth, this fortunate garment, by putting a check on his exuberance, was of the utmost value to Barbarou, and gained for him praises innumerable for the distinction of his bearing and the elegance of his dancing. And Mrs. Whatafter declared that beneath his elegant exterior she could detect "that charming dash, that *furia francese*, which has always characterized the representatives of *la grande nation*."

As for Everest, no sooner had the orchestra struck up than he hurried off to the coffee-room. The colonel, who acted as master of the ceremonies, hunted out the young lord in his retreat, but Everest refused to move, excusing himself on the ground of a splitting headache.

At length eleven o'clock struck. The haughty Mrs. Peernose arose, and, marching up to the band, stopped the music. In vain the dancers protested. The superb matron declared that a rehearsal of one hour's duration was quite sufficient for the purposes of the approaching ball. The party had to bow to her decision, and retired to their canvas homes.





The Grand Cordon of the most illustrious Order.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE CROQUET PARTY.

THE programme of the eminent president of the Tigerslayers' Club was adhered to. That able organizer had varied the entertainments he provided for his friends both in order and kind so as to satisfy all tastes and accomplish all wishes. Each day brought a new excitement, a fresh surprise.

First there came a gigantic battue in the environs of Mahavellipore. Three thousand soldiers of the Maharajah surrounded a mountain, and, driving the game before them, forced them to pass under the sportsmen's fire, while the ladies, comfortably installed in an elegant stand, assisted at the spectacle which concluded with a hecatomb of deer and wild boar.

Then there came a grand dinner at the royal palace, when Goulab Sing displayed before his noble guests all the sumptuous magnificence of his treasures, and covered the table with vessels of gold and silver encrusted with precious stones of a value almost incredible. The dinner being finished, the guests were invited to a dance of bayaderes and a performance of jugglers and jesters. After the supper which followed the entertainment, the magnificent gardens of the palace were illuminated. In all the blaze of the electric light introduced for the first time at Mahavellipore there appeared a fairy procession of elephants decorated with diamonds and caparisoned with cloth of gold, of horsemen in damascened armour on horses with sumptuous trappings, of palkis and litters borne by negro slaves, of musketeers mounted on white camels, of a crowd of fakirs, goosseins, dervishes, and Brahmins brandishing spears and flags and yak-tails from Thibet.

This strange spectacle, which displayed all the barbarous splendour of Oriental luxury, extorted shouts of admiration, and Barbarou himself, quite wild with enthusiasm, exclaimed that it beat all he had seen like it at the Porte-Saint-Martin!

On the following day a grand cricket match took place on the magnificent lawn in front of the Armoudjan pavilion, and at its conclusion a lunch was given in honour of the players by a committee of ladies under the presidency of Mrs. Butnot.

And thus for a week did hunting and feasting continue, and Colonel Shaughnessy's government

was popularity itself with the ladies and gentlemen of the Tigerslayers' Club.

And this was not all; every evening, after conferences which continued with undiminished success, the young people organized a carpet dance as an indispensable prelude to the famous ball which was to be the event of the season. At the request of the ladies the date of this great event had been postponed so as to give time to the ayahs and dress-makers to put the last touches to the costumes they were preparing for the memorable evening.

During the day, when the time was not otherwise occupied, and particularly in the hour or two before sundown, there took place under the large trees of the garden some of those pleasant games, such as croquet or lawn tennis, in which ladies and gentlemen can join.

Among all this gaiety we are grieved to confess that the King-of-the-tigers was forgotten. All the reports agreed in stating that he was far away from Mahavellipore, and had probably left the country to take refuge in the sombre depths of the forests of Gondvana. We might whisper that the ladies were by no means anxious to see their husbands or sons face the formidable monster, and that they were glad to wish him good-bye, and hoped that he might never come back!

The sportsmen themselves seemed to take very little notice of this disappointment, and amused themselves in clearing the country of all it contained in the way of leopards, panthers, cheetahs, lynxes, hyænas, not to mention deer and other

game, the spoils and trophies of which already filled one of the rooms in the pavilion.

Holbeck was quite consoled for the departure of the King-of-the-tigers, to whom he had never wished any harm. Without despising the evening meetings, where he continued to distinguish himself, he left the hunters to themselves, and pursued his investigations among his cherished ants.

His famous *Cryptocerus*, so fortunately discovered on the day of the buffalo hunt, attracted him above all things. He passed hours in the woods, studying the manners of his curious hymenopter, digging into the galleries, taking specimens of different members of the tribe—warriors, workmen, and nurses. Loaded with booty, he would return to his tent, and there, armed with magnifying-glass and microscope, he would examine, dissect, and analyze his little organisms, and enter up his observations in a note-book of alarming dimensions.

In the thick of his studies there was one point which proved a puzzler to our learned friend—what name should he give to the insect he had discovered? Should he call it *Cryptocerus holbeckii*? It surely ought to be so; very many scientists had thus made their names illustrious. But Holbeck had some scruples about it. His profound modesty was shocked at this patent of immortality which he thought of bestowing on himself.

After thinking over the question for some time, he decided to give his famous ant the name of *Cryptocerus goulabsingi*, as a slight recognition of



the gracious hospitality of the Maharajah. When the good doctor informed the king of his decision, his Highness was at first somewhat surprised, and perhaps secretly shocked at seeing his glorious and poetical name—which means the “lion of the roses”—bestowed on a mere ant. But he brightened up when it was explained to him that he would thereby become known to all the world, and passing from surprise to the most lively delight, he there and then sent for the Grand Cordon of the most illustrious Order of the Horn of Siva and hung it on to Holbeck’s neck, who, in his turn, was very much amazed at such an honour.

As for Barbarou, he had become quite oblivious of birds and plumes. He would probably have been very much astonished had any one reminded him that he was “on the road” for Menneval Frères, dealers in feathers and ladies’ ornaments, Rue St. Denis, Paris. It seemed to the brave Marseillais that he had always lived this life of luxury and elegance. With his shoulders wrapped in Everest’s coat, he walked the floors of the pavilion with as much ease as if, instead of laying out on a ship’s yard, he had been prepared for these difficult exercises in the diplomatic depths of the Quai d’Orsay. He was sorely tempted to clip off the flaming fleece with which his red face was framed, but to lay hands on his historic beard seemed too great a sacrifice, and he contented himself with introducing a most unaccustomed symmetry in the arrangement of his hair.

Everest alone, in all this gay festivity, succeeded not in getting rid of his melancholy misanthropy.

Not that he did not try his utmost to keep it down, for he never missed one of the morning or evening meetings. Perhaps it was that he kept too scrupulously to the part he had resolved to play.

Human nature is a strange medley of contradictions. We know with what enthusiasm Everest had jumped at the idea of hiding himself in the humble guise of assistant-naturalist to Dr. Holbeck; and now he found how well he had succeeded in his stratagem, the same Everest was rather piqued that no one had penetrated his secret. Not that he was at all annoyed at the dire impertinence with which the haughty Mrs. Peernose contemplated through her double eye-glass this "representative of the lower classes," or was shocked at the protecting tone in which he was addressed by Mr. Assistant-Deputy-Commissioner Whatafter. He had very soon recognised in these two worthies very excellent specimens of the genus *Snob*, and he knew that he had only to let his title be known to see them change impertinence into effusive obsequiousness. But as time went on, it seemed to him that nature had endowed him with no personal merit whatever, as so few people with whom he came in contact ever appeared to notice any.

He had, however, become great friends with Dr. Cunningham, and the worthy president of the Tigerslayers' Club had by his affability gained his sympathy and respect. But he rather endeavoured to hide his admiration for the colonel, as his daughter was generally with him; and if Everest had to agree with Holbeck that the lady was

most amiable and charming, yet he could not but perceive that she took a cruel pleasure in tormenting bashful and splenetic young men by making them come out of their retirement whether they would or no. And this was what the bashful and splenetic young men supremely disliked.

In fact, Everest would have run a mile away from her, and he frankly and cordially detested Miss Shaughnessy ever since his celebrated croquet misadventure; which had occurred in this way.

Not to be outdone by the cricketers, who had been so very successful, the young ladies had organized a croquet party. Naturally, the gentlemen on the two sides had been chosen from amongst the best players, and naturally also Everest had not the honour of being selected.

The day came, and the whole colony was assembled on the lawn in front of the pavilion. While the young people were setting up the hoops and sticks, and getting ready the mallets and coloured balls, the members of the club, ladies as well as gentlemen, took up their positions in the easy chairs that had been arranged under the trees surrounding the field of play.

Everest, who had once been a first-rate player at the game, wandered about aimlessly among the aristocratic crowd, and amused himself with watching the preparations for the match. Accidentally he found himself close to Colonel Shaughnessy as Mary ran up to him with a very disappointed look on her face, and holding a mallet in each hand. "Papa," she exclaimed, "we have had such a disappointment, and the match is going to fall through! Mr. Griffin, who was to

be my partner, has sent me an apology, and says he cannot play because he has a bad headache. Fancy anybody having a headache on this of all days! And I have no partner, and all our arrangements are upset."

"My dear young lady," said General Butnot, gallantly, rising from his chair, "I regret extremely that my legs—or rather my back—will prevent my taking the place of this very annoying Mr. Griffin; but you have to stoop so much at your game that my rheumatism puts a veto on my joining you."

Mary did not appreciate such feeble wit under such circumstances, and made a slight gesture of disdain. But suddenly her face brightened up as she caught sight of Everest. He had been on hot coals for the last second or two, as he saw the danger that was threatening, and was adroitly manœuvring so as to slip away from the colonel.

"Oh, Mr. Everest!" said Mary. "We shall be all right after all. Will you please be kind enough to take Mr. Griffin's place? I am sure you know how to play;" and very gracefully she held out towards him one of the mallets.

"Certainly. I am much honoured—I—I—" stammered Everest, who wished himself a hundred feet underground, for he felt that all eyes were turned on him. With a little awkwardness he took the mallet, and followed the young lady into the arena.

But who would have believed it? In spite of his awkward beginning, once Everest began to play he forgot all about his spleen and his bashfulness, and took such interest in the game that



Very gracefully she held towards him one of the mallets.



most unexpected success attended his efforts. Thanks to his accuracy of eye, his clever roquets, and his pitiless croquets, he and Miss Mary came in the easiest of winners. There was but one opinion amongst the spectators, and that was that Mr. Everest ought to be champion of England. Even Mrs. Peernose condescended to remark that she never would have thought that "a young man not belonging to the gentry" could ever play croquet so elegantly!

As soon as the game was over, Everest, without waiting for compliments, had thrown down his mallet and disappeared among the shrubs in the garden. Most assuredly he did detest Miss Shaughnessy, who obliged a timid and splenetic noble lord to make a show of himself for the benefit of several dozen ladies and gentlemen.

But Mary was not half so bad as Everest thought her. She had only been thinking of helping her father in keeping on the gaiety and good feeling amongst the people thus thrown together by chance, and as she had no intention of being disagreeable to any one, she was sorry at having provoked the ill-humour of the assistant-naturalist.

When the game was over, she was returning to the camp on her father's arm when she met Holbeck, who, with his inseparable green box over his shoulder, was returning from one of his entomological excursions.

"Doctor," said she, in a tone of gracious reproach, "you promised me to come to our croquet match."

"Quite true," answered Holbeck, "and I owe

you an apology. But Latchman this morning gave me such an interesting account of an ant's nest he had discovered about six miles away from here that I could not resist the temptation. And I have been quite delighted with my excursion. The insects I have been studying to-day almost surpass in interest the *Cryptocerus* itself. I dare avow that, in the same way as their cousins the bees, these industrious little animals collect the nectar from the plants and make it into aromatic honey. I am sure that I have come upon *Myrmex coccystus mellifer*, discovered by Schweisshübel in the Garden of the Gods in Colorado, and since him no one has studied them. It is a very important and serious question, which, joined to my discovery of *Cryptocerus*, throws an unexpected and astonishing light on the relations between the entomological fauna of America and Asia."

"All that is much too learned for me, doctor," said Mary, with a smile, "and I persist in saying that you failed in your duty in not coming to our croquet match. You would have seen something just as unexpected; you would have seen your young friend, Mr. Everest in the character of an accomplished croquet player."

"Everest a croquet player?" exclaimed Holbeck, in surprise.

"You are astonished," continued the young lady, "and I can assure you the poor man never expected such a triumph. When I asked him to take Mr. Griffin's place and handed him the mallet, he looked as though I had given him a crack on the head with it."



"I know him," said Holbeck; "he did not think your invitation particularly agreeable."

"You should look after your friend," said the colonel; "he seems to me to be suffering from the complaint we call the spleen, and he looks as though he was in a very bad way."

"Why does he not take part in our amusements and come to our meetings?" asked Mary. "Has he some serious reason for being so sad?"

"Yes, and no," answered the doctor. "Up to the present his life has not been particularly happy, but I hope that the cloud will soon pass away. It is not my place to tell you his history; suffice it to say that he was left an orphan at a very early age, and by an unfortunate combination of events lived alone in the world without any friends to help or sympathize with him."

"Without any friends?" said the colonel. "Well, doctor, you seem to take a great interest in the lad."

"I do," said Holbeck, "but my friendship is of too recent a date for me to have much influence over him."

"This life in the wild woods is not one to develop a sociable spirit in one who is naturally a savage," observed the colonel.

"Do not mistake him," said Holbeck, with vivacity. "Mr. Everest has no natural inclination for a solitary life. Circumstances have urged him to it. He is a young fellow with the best qualities, of unusually keen and sensitive intellect developed by a first-rate education at Eton. He is straightforwardness itself, and the

excess of this quality is perhaps the reason of his pretended misanthropy."

"I am sorry for him, and I forgive him," said Mary. "He must have suffered a good deal if he has never known a mother's love."

Holbeck remained looking after the colonel and his daughter as they walked off together. Then he nodded his head twice or thrice, began to smile, and took the road to his tent, vigorously rubbing his hands as he did so. This, with him, was a sign of extreme satisfaction.

As he entered the tent he caught sight of Everest, and at a glance perceived that his ill-humour had not quite evaporated. He resolved to immediately take advantage of this circumstance as being particularly favourable for his mysterious machinations.

"My dear friend," said he brusquely, "I think we had better get away from here as soon as possible. My investigations are finished, the King-of-the-tigers is in flight, and there is nothing here to detain us."

"What is your motive for hastening your departure?" asked Everest quickly. "Only yesterday I heard you tell General Butnot that you were going to remain at Mahavellipore until the day the club was dissolved."

"That is true," said Holbeck. "But I only stop here in the hope of amusing you. That hope has proved false; and I freely confess that I had much rather be off. There will be ants enough somewhere else, and I shall soon have to get back to business for the Mennevals."

"But, doctor," replied Everest, somewhat

embarrassed, "how do you know that I am so miserable? I am out shooting every day, I go to all the meetings, and to-day I have even been playing at croquet!"

"Yes, you parade your spleen everywhere; but I have good eyes, thanks to my spectacles, and I see what it costs you to do anything, just as it did at first. At this very moment, for instance, you are furious because you have been obliged to display your marvellous talent as a croquet player before the assembled club."

"That is true, my dear Holbeck; but you know I have been ill for a long time, and you can hardly expect that I can have been cured so completely that some traces of the malady will not appear now and then. I should not like on my account that you should leave a society in which you and Barbarou find so many subjects for amusement. Be it understood, then, that we remain, and I promise to do my best to rid me of my bearishness."

"Well, then, send it the same way as your gilded armour," said Holbeck delightedly, "and all will be well. Never will you have such an opportunity of studying men and things without feeling the burden of your rank and fortune. Make the most of it, and think that the moment they know who you really are, and they are sure to do so some day, your bashfulness and reserve will be worried to death. They will say that even under your disguise you are afraid to lower yourself to the level of those who are your inferiors in rank and birth."

"You think they will say so?"

"I am sure of it. Have you not failed in all the requirements of society in keeping yourself away from their meetings? Have you once danced with either of the four daughters of our sympathetic friend Butnot, or even Miss Shaughnessy, the daughter of our good and gallant president?"

"That is so, doctor," said Everest. "I admit that I have been wrong. But do not be too hard upon me. I promise, if such are your orders, that not only will I dance with the daughters of the general and the colonel, but also with the seven Misses Shortbody, the three Misses Waytown, and even, if you require it, that I will rival Barbarou in the affections of the poetical Mrs. Whatafter."

"I do not ask all that, my dear Everest," said Holbeck, laughing. "And as you are in such excellent temper I do not mind confessing that it will cost me a good deal to leave Mahavellipore, for this very day I have made an un hoped-for discovery."

And then, mounting his hobby, he related in detail his discovery of the *Myrmex* and the honey, and complacently enlarged on the immense consequences that this discovery would have on the comparative entomology of the Old and New World.

Barbarou arrived while this was going on, and interrupted the learned dissertation, which Everest heard with the attentive contrition of a criminal who required a good deal of pardon.

"My friends," exclaimed the sailor, "I have good news for you! Our ball is to take place

to-morrow evening. You know that the ladies of the committee have entrusted to me the flattering mission of superintending the preparations. Having announced to them just now that all was ready, they decided that it would be cruel to prolong the impatience of the young ladies. It is fixed for to-morrow. But now it has been decided, I have nearly gone mad through anticipating that something is still wanting. Only think of the enormous responsibility that rests on my shoulders!" With a feverish hand he drew out his watch, and, glancing at it, replaced it in his pocket. "There is still an hour to dinner-time. I must be off to say something to the mess *chef*, and to come to an understanding with the butler. I shall also look up Herr Becker, the gallant musician who conducts the orchestra. I must give him a parting piece of advice about our famous cotillon that is to be the surprise of the evening. It was my idea. We call it the King-of-the-tigers, but that is a great secret, which I beg you will keep. For the dances we are going to have hunting spoils and costumes. At a given moment the big drum is to imitate the growling of the tiger, and then you will hear in the distance the reports of the guns and the shouts of victory. That will be a striking effect, but I hope it will not frighten the ladies. Don't you think it a capital idea?"

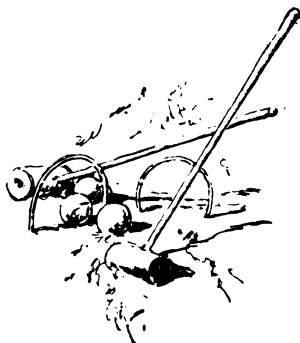
Seizing his hat, he bounded out of the tent as impetuously as a waterspout.

"What do you think of our friend's new character?" asked Everest, with a grin. "Barbarou transformed into the conductor of a cotillon!"

## *THE KING OF THE TIGERS.*

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"I say," said Holbeck, in a kindly tone, "that poor Barbarou may be ridiculous, but then he has a brave, good heart, always ready to oblige his fellow-men."





The guests were received in the peristyle.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE TRIUMPH OF BARBAROU.

ON the night of the ball the pavilion of the Tiger-slayers' Club, with its galleries and corridors and traceried arcades aglow with pyramids of light, stood out like a mass of fire from the deep gloom of the woods that surrounded it. Magnificent carpets from Persia and the Punjab covered its terraces, and on the steps in double rank stood the royal halberdiers in uniforms richly laced with silver, and with turbans decked with glittering plumes.

The guests, having mounted to the terrace, were received in the peristyle by a crowd of chamberlains and native attendants. Among them passed in and out the younger sportsmen, whom the president of the club had appointed masters of the ceremonies. Among them the

ave stooped the lowest to the earlier bullets. It was the same with Everest; once he was started there was no stopping him, and most scrupulously did he carry out the programme traced for him by the doctor.

Strictly observant of the order of precedence, he danced with nearly all the ladies of the Ar-moudjan colony. From the daughters of the general he passed to those of the clan Peernose, then to the Whatafters, then to the Beynons, and then to the really pleasant family of the Rev. Mr. Shortbody.

It must be admitted that he had made one omission, only one, but that was of exceptional gravity. The ball neared its end, and he had not yet presented his respects to the president's daughter. On this point he had certainly failed in his promise, but it was almost too much of the doctor to expect him to dance with a young lady who was his personal enemy. However, he was seized with remorse, and after a long debate with himself, he boldly marched up to the redoubtable Miss Shaughnessy.

"May I have the honour of the next waltz with you?"

The young lady gracefully acknowledged his bow, and, with a glance at her card, remarked most amiably,—

"I am very sorry to say that I am engaged for the three remaining waltzes."

"In that case," continued Everest, with polite insistence, "I hope you will grant me the honour of a quadrille?"

"It is very unfortunate, but my card is full."



“My regret is extreme, I assure you,” said Everest; and with another bow he was preparing to beat a retreat, highly delighted at the success of his interview, when—

“Mr. Everest,” exclaimed the lady, “I forgot to say that I am engaged to Mr. Griffin for the cotillon, and he has had one of his attacks of neuralgia, and is not able to come to-night. Will the cotillon do for you? Yes? Then I will put you down for it.”

Everest bowed, and retreated with anything but a blessing for Mr. Griffin, whose unlucky head seemed to be the cause of all his misadventures.

The cotillon! And he had intended to leave the ballroom before the frightful dance came on, and here he was booked for it, and would have to remain until the close of the ball! For, once engaged in the cotillon, flight was impossible; and he would have to remain for an hour, perhaps for more, at the mercy of a lot of pitiless young misses, who would take advantage of the occasion to bring all such timid and splenetic young men to the penitent form.

Suddenly he remembered that Barbarou had taken upon himself to transform this cotillon into a masquerade, with tableaux and trophies of the chase, and he groaned as he thought of the invention of the gay Marseillais. Only one thing was wanting to make his misery complete, and that was that Miss Shaughnessy should use the privilege the rules of the cotillon gave her, and make him dress up in a pasteboard tiger's head, and bound about the floor like a wild beast to the artillery accompaniment of Herr Becker's orchestra.

Could he not have a sudden attack of headache which would give him an excuse to get rid of Miss Shaughnessy?

In truth he need hardly have gone far for a pretext, for his head was already reeling at the thought that he, Lord Everest, should be clothed in a tigerskin and dancing in a ring of chaffing subalterns and their giggling partners. No, certainly not! His indulgent mentor must find him some way out of the difficulty; he would explain the position, and the doctor would take pity on him.

He soon saw Holbeck discoursing gravely with Mr. Peernose. As he approached him he heard the chief-district-magistrate remark, sententiously,—

“You, my dear Mr. Holbeck, who belong to a country where the aristocracy has seen its privileges destroyed by a terrible revolutionary storm, can have no idea of the part that our nobility plays in England. At the head is the Queen, who to us is quite a sacred being, and around her come the peers, whom we look upon as demigods. Before them the crowd bows down, the laws which regulate our social relations do not seem to have been made for them, and in their sight we are but a vile multitude. So—”

Everest had heard enough, and wisely beat a retreat. It seemed as though the gentleman had been making special reference to him. Although he was here in disguise, yet he represented in that assembly that English aristocracy that Mr. Peernose had been so unjustly disparaging. He would show that “the laws which regulate our social relations” did exist as well for lords as ordinary





"These excellent things were not very easy of access!"

mortals. He would not withdraw, and he would dance the cotillon out from the first figure to the last, even if he had to masquerade in a tigerskin.

Then, stung to the quick, he entered the ball-room, and when he saw "the cotillon" hung in front of the orchestra he sought out Miss Shaughnessy, and in the most amiable manner asked her if she would accept his arm and allow him to get her a little refreshment before the dance began.

The buffet had been arranged by the colonel, with Barbarou's assistance, and was a most brilliant spectacle. It was one mass of flowers and fruit, such as is only possible in these privileged countries. But by the side of such poetic decorations serious matters had been by no means forgotten. Cold joints and entrées, pies and pasties, game and poultry, and pyramids of sandwiches, offered plentiful refreshment to all.

But these excellent things were not very easy of access, for, taking advantage of a short interval, the guests were crowding round the buffet. Everest would have had great difficulty in acceding to Miss Shaughnessy's request for a sandwich and glass of lemonade had Barbarou not luckily discovered him. In an instant the Marseillais had seized the sandwiches and lemonade in his long arms and held them out to Everest over the heads of the crowd. Retreating to a corner of the room to eat her sandwich in quiet, Miss Shaughnessy remarked to Everest, as he happened to remain silent, "You have a most devoted friend in Dr. Holbeck, I think."

"That is true," answered Everest emphatically. "Dr. Holbeck is a most valued friend of mine ;

and I reciprocate his friendship. At the same time, I may say that he is the first man who ever inspired me with that feeling."

"Oh! I understand," replied the young lady; "the doctor told us your history yesterday."

She would willingly have recalled her imprudent words, for she saw a deep frown settle on his face as he bitterly answered, "My history! That is a very fine word for such a trifle! My life, like that of a happy people, has no history."

"I wished to say," replied Miss Shaughnessy, gently, "that Dr. Holbeck told us that you had never known your father and mother, and we pitied you with all our hearts."

"You are much too good," said Everest, somewhat moved, and then, quickly hiding his emotion, he continued, "I think I hear the band beginning the cotillon. We shall be late."

The dancers were indeed hastening back to the ballroom, in the centre of which, by Barbarou's directions, a circle of chairs had been arranged. All who were to take part in the cotillon were to occupy the chairs, while the ladies and gentlemen who were to remain spectators gathered outside the ring, so as to lose none of the performance.

Barbarou was in the centre ready to direct the changing figures, and in this he was assisted by Mr. Bluecoat, one of the youngest members of the club. At a sign from the Marseillais, Herr Becker raised his *bâton*, and the band began the grand "King-of-the-Tigers' Waltz." Immediately the dancers stood up.

The music opened with a light, sparkling prelude, followed in a few minutes by a pastoral

symphony, which was the signal for the "Shepherds' dance." Barbarou distributed golden crooks to the young men, and the young ladies received garlands of roses, whose graceful interlacements in the course of the dance were heartily applauded by the spectators.

Suddenly the big drum gave forth a long, loud growl, announcing the approach of the tiger, to which there succeeded, in the words of the programme, "a lively agitation among the flock." The crooks disappeared, and new accessories were brought in, consisting of heads of buffalo, sheep, cattle, and goats, roguishly distributed by the ladies to their partners.

His lordship received as his share a magnificent pasteboard head with golden horns; and even this, strange to relate, did not prevent his gallantly offering his arm to the youngest of the Misses Shortbody and waltzing her once round the ring.

A new signal from Barbarou; the heads were thrown off, the brass instruments of the band sounded forth a fanfare. The "huntsmen," armed with golden rifles, rushed to the help of the shepherds, and, before attacking the monster, executed a certain number of scientific figures under the direction of the gallant Mr. Bluecoat. Lord Everest, at the orders of this young officer, found himself obliged to mount a pedestal decked with flowers, and in that elevated position, begirt by the dancers, he personified the protecting genius of the forest.

Up to this the divers acts of the drama had been run through in perfect order and amid general approbation. Barbarou was modestly

triumphant, but his heart beat high as the moment of the great climax approached.

At length the band attacked the grand final movement, opening with the tremolos and clashing of the cymbals. "The tiger is coming!" The imprudent hunters and their companions continued to waltz without appearing sensible of the danger. The poetical Mrs. Whatafter, who was passionately fond of dancing, jumped at that moment into Everest's arms, and profited by the occasion to declare her unbounded enthusiasm for the inventive genius of Mr. Barbarou, of Marseilles.

"Only a Frenchman," she said, "would have had such romantic ideas. To replace the ridiculous figures of the cotillon by a connected story in tableaux is a true inspiration of genius!"

"My friend Barbarou," said Everest, "has a very vivid imagination."

"Say rather, sir, that he is a poet!" exclaimed Mrs. Whatafter.

But hereupon the horns and the trombones, the cornets and the saxhorns, all together, all at once gave forth the most heart-rending, ear-splitting yell, and the big bass drum roared out a horrible growl. A shout came of "There's the tiger!" and at the same moment the reports of the guns in quick succession were heard without.

The surprise in the room was complete. The dancers looked at each other in dismay.

"Roomb! roomb!" went the big drum. "Bang! bang!" went the rifles.

The guests began to understand. The dance was resumed. But Mrs. Whatafter did not understand, and, dropping Everest's arm, she



threw around her a look of distress, as if seeking some way of escape from the terrible danger.

Barbarou rushed forward to reassure the impressionable wife of the assistant-deputy-commissioner, but in his haste his foot slipped on the waxed floor, and while the guns again began their "Bang! bang!" the unfortunate Marseillais rolled on the ground as if struck by some mysterious bullet.

"Your friend is imitating the death of the tiger," said General Butnot to his neighbour, Doctor Holbeck. "How thoroughly he enters into it all."

"I do not think that that sudden disappearance was down in his programme," answered Holbeck, rather uneasy. "I hope he has not hurt himself."

Already ten arms were stretched out to Barbarou, and the beaming face of the red man appeared above the dancers.

Unanimous applause greeted his appearance, and a general cry arose,

"Three cheers for Mr. Barbarou!"

At length the brave sailor received the just reward of his trouble and anxiety. He remained the hero of this memorable evening.

With a gracious smile Barbarou thanked the crowd for their eulogistic applause, and he lifted his arms high up in the air to signal Herr Becker to attack the triumphal march with which to end the cotillon.

The gesture was not completed as he intended. A loud crack resounded through the room. Incapable of resisting so many shocks and emotions, the famous black coat that had been lent him by

Everest at last gave way, and splitting into two equal parts, left down the middle of his back an appalling solution of continuity.

At the sound of the cracking the Marseillais understood the full extent of the catastrophe, and he escaped in confusion from the room which had just seen his triumph.

"Poor Barbarou!" said Everest, rejoining Holbeck. "He was hit in the moment of victory."

"What would you have?" philosophically answered the doctor. "The Tarpeian rock is close to the Capitol."





Goulab Sing appeared in person to receive his guests.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A ROYAL INTERVIEW.

BARBAROU'S accident was not so very serious after all. The repair of the famous coat required but a few stitches. Latchman, like all native servants, was very handy with the needle, and soon removed all trace of the catastrophe; in fact, he did better, for, by putting in a double lining, he rendered a return of the calamity impossible.

But the gallant Marseillais could not entirely console himself, although Holbeck all the morning tried his best to make him forget his misfortune.

"Your triumph, Barbarou," said he, as they sat down to breakfast, "was complete, and no one can hold you responsible for the strength of your coat stitches. As the guests left they were

unanimous in praising your famous cotillon, and Mr. Titbit, who is the correspondent of the *Mofussilite*, promised to send a very flattering account to his paper—omitting, of course, any reference to the unfortunate accident at the finish.”

“Then,” said Barbarou proudly, “do you think that the Bombay journals will mention my ‘King-of-the-Tigers’ cotillon?”

“I am sure of it,” answered the doctor; and, to put an end to this delicate subject, he said to Everest, “As for you, my dear friend, please accept my heartiest felicitations at your brilliant conduct. I think you are already within sight of your recovery. A little perseverance and the desired result will be attained. I can even say that, for a commencement, you have pushed your courage to the verge of heroism. To face a cotillon is a most brilliant action.”

“I am not at all proud of the action,” said Everest, with a smile, “for I only bowed to circumstances; I did all I could to keep away from it.”

“It does not matter,” replied Holbeck. “All I know is that you played your part most gallantly. When you were standing bolt upright among the crowd of dancers, and evoking with your gilded plaything the genii of the forest, I thought you were really superb.”

“You are too flattering.”

“Don’t apologize,” said the doctor. “I saw you laugh heartily and frankly, and that, you know, would not have happened to you a short time ago. It is true that, if I were not afraid of

exciting our friend's susceptibility, I should add that the attack of hilarity coincided very strangely with the destruction of one of your coats which decorated Barbarou's shoulders."

"Oh, the traitor!" exclaimed the sailor. "He laughed at my misfortune!"

"Believe me, my dear friend—" said Everest, apologetically.

"No apologies," continued Barbarou; "I forgive you because you have laughed, and I will crack your coat as often as you please if it will only have the same result."

"You are the best fellows in the world!" exclaimed Everest with sudden enthusiasm, and rising, he held out a hand to each of his companions, and they shook it warmly. "Allow me," added he, "to thank you. Instead of leaving me to my misanthropy, you bear all my ill-humour without complaint, and really by your goodness, generosity, and disinterestedness, you led me to love my fellow-men."

"My dear Everest," said Holbeck, "I am not worthy of all your compliments. You are ill; I am a doctor, and want to cure you, that is all. I wish to show you that humanity is not so bad as you think, and that the qualities which you are pleased to recognize in us are, thank God, very largely represented."

"I begin to believe a little in them," replied Everest. "It is true that here I have met with vain, pretentious people, who think me humble in rank and fortune, and treat me with some disdain; but, on the other hand, I have found others whom this apparent humility has not prevented

from showing a discreet sympathy, such as everything compels me to think disinterested."

"Yes," said Holbeck, "this colony of the Armoudjan is an excellent image of society, and, in spite of a few absurdities—and where are they not?—the majority of those who compose it are decent people."

"My friends," said Barbarou, who did not care for long dissertations, "you know that we are to meet at two o'clock at the gate of the Armoudjan to go to the Mouti Mahal."

"Meet? Mouti Mahal? Why?" asked Holbeck.

"Have you forgotten," answered Barbarou, "that his highness to-day inaugurates his summer palace, and that the ladies and members of the Tigerslayers' Club are invited to a gigantic picnic in the palace gardens?"

"I had forgotten it," said Holbeck frankly. "Since we came here jollification succeeds jollification with such regularity that I verily believe the story of the King-of-the-tigers has been invented with the sole object of disseminating innumerable indigestions. We go from breakfast to lunch, and from lunch to picnic, and, what with the dinners and the suppers, I do not know a stomach that can stand it."

It often fell to the brave naturalist to protest against the life of pleasure that was being indulged in at the Armoudjan, but his protestations were merely matters of form. At heart, though Holbeck was compelled to pass his life in the solitudes of the wild woods, he was an eminently sociable man, and his delicate and playful character found these few weeks spent among

amiable and educated people highly agreeable. If he did not allow himself, like Barbarou, to have his head turned by the glitter of aristocracy, he none the less considered it a piece of good fortune to find himself mixing in a world from which his humble position had hitherto excluded him.

A few minutes after the conversation we have just narrated Holbeck bestrode his peaceful mule, and, escorted by his companions on horseback, rode off towards the gate of the Armoudjan.

Beneath the large trees at the point where the roads met a crowd of horsemen had collected from all parts of the camp. This time the squadron was increased by the addition of several ladies in the saddle, while their mammas occupied the landaus which his highness had placed at their disposal.

At two o'clock precisely Colonel Shaughnessy gave the signal, and the cavalcade moved off, the horsemen caracoling beside the carriages. The road was wide and in good condition, and stretched away south of the town, ascending through a wooded valley which commanded the heights of the Mahadeo hills.

After a journey of a couple of hours, during which the horses were severely tried at some of the hills, the monumental gate forming the entry to the Mouti Mahal park was reached. Almost immediately the summer palace of his highness appeared in view, and was greeted with a general shout of admiration.

In the centre of a wide stretch of verdure, begirt by thick woods, lay a vast assemblage of

buildings, with innumerable terraces, towers, and minarets. In the centre rose the Mouti Mahal, the palace of pearls itself, one of those luxurious architectural fancies that Indians alone know how to realize—a monument in the grandeur of its proportions; an artistic jewel in the delicacy and profusion of its ornament. On three sides of a large green were the long, many-coloured façades, with their light traceried arcades; while on the other side of the rectangle was a large sheet of water, alive with swans and birds of brilliant plumage, and bathing the very base of the buildings and reflecting the balconies and moucharabies. Beyond the green was the park, planted with gigantic trees which extended up to the wild, bare rocks, whence leapt a foaming cascade, whose waters fed the lake.

Quite an army of servants, pages, and soldiers were in waiting at the palace, and as the ladies and gentlemen of the camp of the Armoudjan pulled up in front of the principal entrance, his highness Goulab Sing appeared in person to receive his guests.

With great gallantry, and with the air of a man schooled in all the rules of etiquette, did the Maharajah hasten to the carriage which bore Mrs. Butnot and Mrs. Peernose, and offer them his arm to aid them to alight. Then he ran to greet the other ladies, and then when this duty was accomplished shook hands in due rotation with the principal members of the club, not forgetting his favourite Holbeck, "the most learned doctor, and Grand Cordon of the Royal Order of the Horn of Siva."



On entering the great hall, which occupied the centre of the ground floor of the palace, the king's guests could not help again expressing their admiration. The room realized all those fairy conceptions which our European decorations imitate by artful effects of colour and light. But here the sumptuosity was real. Columns of white marble, encrusted with mosaics and precious stones, supported a ceiling picked out in gold, silver, and lapis lazuli, from whence hung, like bouquets of flowers, elaborate ornaments in rock crystal, glittering in their rainbow tints like so many jewels. Between the arcades surrounding the room were strange idols, with heads many and grimacing and innumerable arms, all clothed in rich brocades, and covered with gems and precious stones. At the end was the golden throne itself, fixed on a base of lapis lazuli from Badakshan.

The colonel gave expression to the visitors' surprise at such an accumulation of marvels when, addressing the king, he said,—

“How is it, Maharajah, that up to this day you have kept us in ignorance of this palace, which I do not hesitate to call one of the marvels of India? I suppose you were afraid that such a spectacle would render us insensible to all the splendid things you have hitherto shown us?”

“You are mistaken, colonel,” said his highness. “If I have not shown you this palace, where my ancestors have deposited all the riches of their treasures, it is because I myself have till now been kept away from it by a terrible enemy. It

is to you that I owe the power of coming here to-day."

"What enemy could have obliged your highness to abandon so enchanting a palace?" asked the colonel with surprise.

"You shall know," said the king. "From the time of my regretted and venerated father, the Maharajah Rambhir Sing, this palace has always been my favourite residence. Here it is that, resting from the cares of government, I can come far from the noise of the capital and pass the happiest moments of my life among devoted friends. Here it is also that, following the custom established by my ancestors, I have always held the great assemblies of my kingdom, and celebrated in this sacred hall the ceremonies of that religion of which the divine Deotas have made me pontiff.

"About twelve months ago I had just sacrificed in the adjoining temple the white bull that every year on the eve of the Dassara I offer to Siva, the all-powerful sovereign of Merou.

"As soon as I finished the sacrifice I took my place on this throne, and, clothed in my triple golden crown and my royal mantle, I received the adorations of the princes and nobles who came to bow before me. The bayaderes, the servants of Siva, danced in the centre of the hall to the sound of the viol and the flute, and the Brahmans intoned the slokas of the sacred hymns.

"Suddenly a terrible noise was heard outside the room. The chants ceased, the bayaderes paused in their mystic dance, and I, in anger at the unusual interruption, gave orders that the





"The King-of-the-tigers himself !"

author of it should be immediately chastised. But while I was speaking a terrible growl greeted my ears.

"In an instant nobles, warriors, priests, and dancers, seized with indescribable panic, rushed out of this hall. Even I was seized with the same terror, and would have quitted my throne and fled, but the heavy ornaments of gold, the jewels and the chains which ornamented my shoulders, kept me in my place. I did not attempt to take off these ornaments, these emblems of my sacred power. I blushed at the thought of imitating my servants, and I resolved to die, if I must die, like a king, and so I waited on my throne expecting the messenger of an angered deity.

"And then I saw enter this deserted hall with slow, majestic step an enormous tiger, so gigantic that I, who have killed fifty in my lifetime, never saw one like him. I recognized the rapacious monster that for a year had been ravaging my kingdom."

"The King-of-the-tigers!" exclaimed the sportsmen, much interested in the story.

"The King-of-the-tigers himself," said Goulab Sing. "Advancing into the middle of the room, he stopped, and I felt his eyes of fire fixed upon mine. He crouched, and uttered a formidable growl, echoed again and again by the vaulted roof. I thought he was going to leap upon me, and I felt my blood freeze in my veins. But I remained motionless, apparently impassible.

"Then the monster, turning his head, perceived the effigies of the Deotas ranged round

the hall, and thinking probably that I was but one of them, like them a block of metal and a cluster of stones, he uttered a hoarse growl, arose, and went away with the same slow, majestic stride.

"Perhaps he would have gone off without harming any one, but a poor bayadere happened to cross his path as he went. The tiger bounded on to her, and bore the unfortunate woman away to the woods. Her piercing shrieks resounded in my ears for many a day thereafter.

"My people pretended that the ferocious beast had found the victim he sought, for the Bagh Rajah, like all the man-eaters, is said to prefer the fair sex."

"How horrible!" exclaimed the ladies, and more than one of them glanced in terror at the stretch of lawn where the tragedy had taken place.

"Ladies," said General Butnot, "you need not reproach the King-of-the-tigers for what I consider his excellent taste."

The general's well-meant pleasantry did not seem to allay their fears.

"From that day," said the Maharajah, "the tiger frequently returned to this palace. Several courageous shikaris who endeavoured to dispute his entrance were one after the other slain by him. Confessing myself vanquished, I abandoned these enchanted halls, which became the favourite retreat of the redoubtable monster."

"But then it is terrible for you to have brought us here!" exclaimed Mrs. Whatafter. "If the tiger were to come!"

“Be not afraid, madam,” said Goulab Sing. “The King-of-the-tigers has been gone from here for many days. He precipitately fled when he learnt that the noble sportsmen of Europe had come to my assistance. I am afraid that if ever he comes back it will only be after they have gone.”





But Everest had reached him.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE PIONIC.

IN spite of this tranquillizing conclusion, the Maharajah's narrative had thrown a gloom over all. Even the sportsmen, anxious as they were to come face to face with the terrible King-of-the-tigers, did not care to expose their wives and daughters to such a meeting.

Happily a joyous fanfare sounded, and changed their thoughts. It was from Herr Becker's band, that had accompanied the colony of the Armoud-jan to the picnic.

Beneath the dense shade of the great trees in the park sumptuous tables awaited the guests, and soon amid the festivity the unlucky King-of-the-tigers had disappeared.

His highness had condescended to take part in



the picnic, and presided, assisted by Mrs. Butnot and Mrs. Peernose, while the colonel, flanked by Butnot and Holbeck, sat at the other end.

Such an occasion could not be allowed to pass unimproved. As soon as the viands had been dispatched the toasts began. Goulab Sing proposed the health of "The Queen," and the colonel responded with that of his highness, "the eminent and hospitable Sovereign of Mahavellipore." As the toasting threatened to continue until it was time to return to the Armoudjan, the young ladies, with the maternal consent, left the table, and with them went the younger men, leaving their elders to continue by themselves their politico-scientific dissertations.

Gladly did the laughing juniors plunge into the leafy shadows of the park on their way to the cascade, which they had heard was very picturesque. But when they had arrived there they found on the very borders of the stream that bore away the water from the fall such a splendid stretch of unbroken green turf that a shout of admiration arose from every one.

"What a fine croquet-ground it would make!" said the young ladies.

"Yes, it would be difficult to find a more perfect ground," said Mr. Griffin, with the air of a connoisseur. "Unfortunately, I do not suppose that his highness has a game here to offer us."

"But unless I am mistaken," said the charming Miss Shaughnessy, "there ought to be a box in the carriage which brought Mrs. Butnot and my aunt. Papa ordered one to be put in, in case we found a nice place to play."

"How lucky!" exclaimed the ladies.

Mr. Griffin and Mr. Bluecoat disappeared at a run, and in a few minutes returned with the box that was so much desired.

"If you like," said the eldest Miss Butnot, "we will play the return to our last match. Miss Shaughnessy can choose her side, as she did the other day, and I will keep my old partners."

"That is it!" exclaimed the girls. "We will have the return. Gentlemen, take the same colours as before."

"But," timidly observed Mr. Griffin, "which side am I to be on? You know that my wretched headache prevented my taking part in the first match."

"You can look on," said Miss Shaughnessy, maliciously, "and act as umpire, unless Mr. Everest, who took your place the other day, cares to give you his now."

"If you will allow me," said Everest, "I have my mallet, and I will keep it."

"Certainly," said Miss Butnot, interposing. "Mr. Everest was the champion in the last match, and he cannot retire to-day without causing us, if we win it, to lose the fruits of our victory."

Mr. Griffin thus saw himself refused the honours of combat, and had to content himself with looking on. And Everest was quite happy at being able to inflict this innocent vengeance on the unhappy author of his past miseries. But these miseries seemed completely forgotten, or else the young lord was scrupulously obeying the orders of Dr. Holbeck, for he threw himself into the game with quite juvenile ardour.

This time Miss Shaughnessy's adversaries endeavoured to win victory to their side, and the battle was long and warmly disputed.

Miss Butnot had made a very able disposition of her forces, and while she and her friends tried to pass the hoops and reach the stick, she confided to her partners the duty of looking after Everest and tormenting him without mercy. But the young lord was a very much better hand at the game than they bargained for, and, notwithstanding all they could do, continued to send their balls rolling to all sides of the horizon, and, clearing off the obstacles one by one, flew to the help of his associates and helped them along to victory.

Miss Butnot saw with dismay the number of rovers augmenting in the enemy's camp. Defeat, crushing and humiliating, seemed again inevitable.

Suddenly from the mountain was heard a confused noise, which seemed to rapidly approach the place where they were playing. At first but slight attention was paid to it, but soon, to their astonishment, a group of natives sprang into view, and, shouting as they went, seemed to be running for their lives.

"What is the matter with those people?" asked Miss Butnot, rather alarmed.

She had scarcely finished, when among the shouting she was able to distinguish the terrible words, "Bagh Rajah! The King-of-the-tigers!" At the same time, from among the rocks close by came a fearful growl, repeated again and again by the echo.

The players, both ladies and gentlemen, paused for a moment undecided, but as they again heard the growl they were seized with a foolish panic, and rushed towards the palace in disorder.

Amongst those who thus fled, without even thinking of covering the retreat of the frightened girls, not one would have hesitated, gun in hand, to have faced the tiger, but powerlessness paralyzes the bravest, and panic is the most catching of complaints. Everest himself, brave heart as he was, fled—carried away by the irresistible instinct of self-preservation.

Engrossed in the game, he had been one of the last to quit the ground, and the fugitives were some distance ahead of him. This mattered little; he knew that in a few strides he could catch them up, for none of them could outrun him.

Suddenly he heard behind him a piercing shriek which made his blood run cold, and stopped him. Turning, he saw Miss Shaughnessy on the ground. The unhappy girl in her flight had caught her foot in one of the hoops and been thrown down.

Everest ran towards her to help her to rise, when he saw leisurely approaching from among the rocks an enormous tiger—without doubt the King-of-the-tigers himself. With his eyes fixed on the young girl, the monster advanced, scratching the ground like a cat, ready to leap on his victim.

At this sight a flash passed before the young man's eyes, and he felt his heart beat so as almost to burst its walls. At last he was facing the death he had so long desired and expected, and, happier than he had ever dreamed he could be, he

was by his death to save the life of the poor child on the ground. Yes, he would die, and gladly give his valueless life to retain for Colonel Shaughnessy all that remained to him of happiness in this world.

Mechanically he picked up one of the boxwood mallets that lay on the grass, and, armed with the frail plaything, ran towards the tiger. The monster stopped when he saw the young man coming to meet him. He opened his huge jaws and gave a loud growl. Doubtless it seemed strange that any one would dispute the prey that had been prepared for him. And so, haughty and menacing, he was pulling himself together to punish the madman for his temerity.

But Everest had reached him. With a movement of unconscious bravado, the young man brandished the mallet for an instant, and then, with all his strength, brought it down with a crash between the tiger's eyes. The toy broke in a hundred pieces on the brute's forehead of stone.

At the unexpected attack the King-of-the-tigers had recoiled. Everest waited for him to spring, and instinctively shut his eyes. What was his surprise—his stupefaction—when he opened them a second afterwards to see the redoubtable monster in full retreat, with his tail down, like a dog that had just been whipped!

"Well," thought the young lord; "it is written that death is not to come to me."

Amazed, he stayed there, oblivious of all that had preceded and brought on this meeting. But the reverie only lasted for a minute; soon he

remembered that the young lady was still on the grass, perhaps wounded, and more or less in a swoon.

He turned round; Mary was already standing up, and as he approached to reassure her, or to question her, she held out her hand to him and quietly said,—

“Thank you; thank you for both my father’s sake and my own!”

The young man bowed, and respectfully clasped the brave girl’s hand. The sportsmen came running up with their guns, but the King-of-the-tigers had disappeared among the impenetrable thickets of the jungle.





Under the escort of sportsmen armed to the teeth.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE CHAMPION OF THE TIGERSLAYERS.

THE sudden apparition of the King-of-the-tigers, who was thought to be far away from Mahavellipore, produced on the members of the Armoudjan colony an effect which Dr. Holbeck, not without a little malice, compared to that excited by a man in the middle of an ant-hill.

At first the panic was great. The ladies, half dead with fright, were helped into the carriages and brought back to camp, under the escort of sportsmen armed to the teeth, and supported by a detachment of the Maharajah's troops.

Once at the Armoudjan the alarm somewhat subsided; but, to reassure the ladies, most elaborate precautions were adopted—such as a

throw a strong cordon of troops round the country to prevent all attempt at flight on the part of the monster.

During this long tumultuous conference it seemed to Holbeck that Everest was more thoughtful and anxious than usual, and as they came out of the club he took the young man's arm, and said to him, in a kindly tone, "What makes you so thoughtful to-night? Are you not satisfied with what you have done to-day? Without you our excellent friend Shaughnessy would perhaps at this moment be plunged in inconsolable grief."

"Do not talk like that," said Everest. "You are mistaken, Holbeck. I will no longer delay telling you what for some time I have felt. In whom shall I confide if not in you, my only mentor?"

"Well, say on," said the doctor; "the night is delightful, and, while Barbarou sleeps, we can talk as we walk. I do not suppose that the King-of-the-tigers will pursue us into this garden when it is guarded by two hundred sepoy."

Leaving Barbarou to go to bed alone, the two men strolled off among the gloomy thickets of the Armoudjan.

What was the subject of their interview? We do not know, but anyhow Everest's confession must have been of some length, for more than an hour elapsed before they regained their tent.

As they entered, Holbeck stopped the young man and said,—

"Believe me, my dear Everest, it is always better, once you have formed a resolution, to put it in execution at once. Give me permission to



act without delay. Who knows what may happen? Our colony for some reason or another may suddenly break up, our friends will disperse, and then—”

“I leave myself entirely in your hands,” answered the young man. “Do as seemeth best. Is not the fortune of my life at stake?”

“So be it,” replied Holbeck; “to-morrow morning. But there is one thing I have to ask you. Let me tell the whole truth.”

“Like you, dear doctor,” answered Everest, “I hate a falsehood. But our artifice is a very innocent one and certainly excusable if it can assure my happiness and cure me for ever of my malady. Look upon me as but convalescent and pardon my eccentricity. I repeat I wish to owe nothing to my title or fortune, and if I think too well of the people I have been speaking of to believe them sensible to such influences, I do not wish the world at large to think any less of them than I do.”

“Well, then,” said the doctor, “to-morrow morning.” And they separated and went to bed.

When Holbeck was alone he mechanically took off his gold spectacles, and remained for some seconds gazing blankly at the wall of the tent. Then he seemed quite satisfied, rubbed his hands rapidly together, and murmured,—

“We are getting on, and very much better than I expected.”

In the morning, as ten o'clock struck, Holbeck came out of his tent. His cravat was whiter than ever, and in spite of the early hour he wore his best black coat.

The good doctor made his way to Colonel Shaughnessy's encampment. A servant introduced him into an apartment where the president of the Tigerslayers' Club was seated before a table arranging the reports of the shikaris who had been out watching the enemy.

As he saw Holbeck enter, the colonel rose, and, holding out both his hands, greeted him with,—

“What good wind has brought you here at this hour, dear doctor? I hope you have come to breakfast. Mary will be very sorry to have missed your visit. She has had to go and look after Mrs. Peernose, whose feelings were so harrowed yesterday that she had a series of nervous attacks, and the poor woman cannot get rid of them.”

“I regret to hear that Mrs. Peernose has not yet recovered from the shock she received at Mouti Mahal,” answered Holbeck, “and I thank you for your hospitality; but the motive that brings me here at this early hour is a very serious and important one for me.”

“Sit down, then,” said the colonel, offering a chair. “I am listening. Let me tell you beforehand, though, that if I can help you in any way, I will.”

The doctor sat down, and after adjusting his spectacles, which had slipped down to the end of his nose, he said, in a slightly agitated tone,—

“Colonel Shaughnessy, I come in the name of my pupil and friend, Mr. Everest, to beg you to do him the honour of giving him the hand of your daughter, Miss Mary.”

Holbeck had rolled this sentence off very





“The hand of my daughter!”

rapidly, as if he was in a hurry to reach the end, and that done, he darted a piercing look at the brave colonel, who jumped out of his chair as he finished, and exclaimed,—

“The hand of my daughter! But you do not mean it?”

“That is where you are mistaken, my dear sir. We do mean it very seriously,” replied Holbeck, who regained his assurance as he saw the old officer’s confusion.

The colonel resumed his seat.

“Excuse my abruptness,” said he. “My surprise—such an unexpected request—I am much flattered—I am greatly honoured—but—”

Obviously the gallant president felt himself on dangerous ground. He stammered and stuttered in search of some good reason to keep her who was so dear to him, and whom the doctor had come to take away from him; fearing to offend or even to cause a coolness with a man who had inspired him with profound esteem.

Holbeck came to his help by saying, “I quite understand all the reasons that you would give me, but you know what a high opinion I entertain of your charming daughter. You can therefore see that if I make myself the interpreter of a demand which affects his whole future, it is because I consider Mr. Everest the most loyal and straightforward of men, and endowed with all the qualities that a father could require in a son-in-law.”

After this beautiful speech the doctor persuaded himself that he had conquered his adversary, but he soon saw that he was mistaken. The colonel

had at length found a substantial ground of defence.

"Before consulting my daughter on so serious a matter," answered he, "you will permit me to speak to you in all frankness. I have a very high opinion of Mr. Everest; I have watched him with great interest since I have had the honour of his acquaintance. I consider him a perfect gentleman. You know that amongst Englishmen that goes a long way. Now to that feeling of interest which I have taken in Mr. Everest there has been added since yesterday one of sincere gratitude for his splendid devotion in risking his life to save my daughter's. That, you say, ought to be enough to make me gladly consent for my daughter to bear the name of so estimable a man. But—" Here a cloud passed over the old officer's face; he hesitated, and continued, with some embarrassment, "I am a poor man, Dr. Holbeck, and if I do not seek a fortune for my child any more than she herself does, it is at least my duty to see that I find her a home suitable to her station in life. Now Mr. Everest has no fortune; his position is precarious."

Holbeck was on the point of exclaiming, "Quite the contrary! The young man you think so much of, in whom you have found every good quality, has the enormous advantage into the bargain of being one of the richest and most influential noblemen in the United Kingdom." But he remembered his promise to Everest, and contented himself with observing, "I admit that the present position of my young friend is not very brilliant, but that may improve, and one day

it may perhaps be such as to gratify the most ambitious dreams."

"I do not doubt it," said the colonel; "and I can understand that you have faith in your pupil's future. Still, that future is rather problematical, and I cannot—"

The colonel did not finish the sentence. The look of sadness which came over Holbeck's face made a deep impression on him, and he rose, and, with soldierly abruptness seizing the doctor's hand, exclaimed, "Doctor, I wish I were a rich man! But I have only my pay—not a penny more—and that is not enough for three persons to live on. And I like the lad very much—more than you would think—"

Holbeck had also risen, and waited anxiously, for the old officer seemed to be thinking of something.

"Your friend is an Englishman, is he not?" said the colonel.

"Yes; born in Yorkshire, I believe."

"Is he related to Lord Everest?"

"He belongs to the same family," answered Holbeck, who could not suppress a smile.

"Indeed!" said the colonel, who seemed to be following up some secret idea. "Do you know whether he would dislike to become a soldier?"

"I do not know," said the doctor; "but I never heard him express any objection to such a career."

"Well then, in that case," continued Colonel Shaughnessy, "if we were once to get him into the Indian army we might push him on. But

what is he to do in the meantime? There is only one way we can manage it."

"I do not understand," said Holbeck.

"The only way is for Everest to kill the King-of-the-tigers!"

"How so?" asked the doctor.

"Mr. Everest is an accomplished sportsman," continued the colonel; "he will kill the King-of-the-tigers, take the skin to the Maharajah, take the reward of the lac of rupees, and the interest on that will give him enough to live on till he gets fairly started—"

"And then?" asked Holbeck, seeing the colonel pause.

"And then—we will see," said the colonel.

"I will convey your conditions to my young friend," said Holbeck, "and I hope with all my heart that he will be able to accept them."

"And so do I," said the colonel as the friends shook hands.

Once outside the tent, Holbeck could not help muttering,—

"So much for this lad's idiotic inventions. He had only to say, We are Lord Everest, of Grosmore Castle, a peer of the United Kingdom, with wealth untold, and in giving us your daughter not only would you add to your happiness and ours, but you would crush with jealousy all the Peernoses, Whatafters, Beynons, and other individuals that hold their noses so high above the horizon. Shaughnessy is a brave man without ambition or pretension. All could have been done at once. I could have found out Miss Mary and I could have said to her, 'This lord that loves you



has the best heart of any man I know in spite of his title and his millions.' While now, with our falsehoods, we are in a nice old muddle. We have got to run after an unseizable monster, kill him, skin him like a rabbit, and, clothed in the spoil, are to play the young Hercules before the eye-glasses of Mrs. Peernose and the curl-papers of Mrs. Butnot. After that we have got to mount the red jacket and do whatever the colonel chooses to order. Ah, well! The patriarch's labour was indulgence itself compared with that of this fierce president of the Tigerslayers."

As he finished this peroration Holbeck reached the tent.

Everest was waiting at the door, and anxiously asked him,—

"Well?"

"My dear friend," said the doctor, "by your own fault you have put yourself in such a position that you must conquer or die."

"How so?"

"Before you become his son-in-law that cold-blooded colonel requires that you should bring him the tigerskin."

"The skin of the King-of-the-tigers?"

"Of the King-of-the-tigers himself."

"Then I am saved!" exclaimed Everest. "In eight hours or less the tigerskin shall be at Colonel Shaughnessy's feet;" and he added, so quietly that Holbeck did not hear him, "or I shall have ceased to live."

The doctor did not share the young man's enthusiasm. The enterprise seemed unduly dangerous, and he blamed himself for having

urged Everest to act as he had done. In acquainting him with what had passed at his interview with the colonel, he endeavoured to raise all the obstacles that he could. But Everest's determination was taken, and no difficulty could turn him from it.

In the evening, after the club dinner, the members proceeded to the election of the candidates who were to make the first attack on the King-of-the-tigers. Twelve names, amongst which were those of Everest and Barbarou, appeared on the list.

As they were about to proceed to the vote by which they were to select the fortunate sportsman who was to lead off the campaign, the president made a short speech.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I am about to ask a favour of you on behalf of one of our young colleagues, which I think he has merited owing to his noble conduct in a recent matter. When the other day we fled beneath the shadows of the Mouti Mahal, a prey to justifiable alarm, inasmuch as we had not our weapons with us, one alone amongst us dared to remain, and, with a mere toy in his hand, face the terrible monster. Now, it seems to me that it is only justice that he who faced the tiger then should be the first to face him now."

Unanimous applause greeted this declaration of the president, and Barbarou, taking Everest by the shoulders, ran him out from the background, where he was modestly hiding.

"I propose, gentlemen," said General Butnot, "that we vote by acclamation for the courageous

candidate whom our friend Shaughnessy has so justly recommended: that our colleague Everest be the champion of the Tigerslayers."

Every hand was raised in confirmation, and there came a shout of,—

"Three cheers for Everest!"

Everest was now in the centre of a circle which had formed round him.

"My dear colleagues," he said, "I thank you for the unmerited favour you have shown me. I will try to sustain as bravely as I can the honour of the Tigerslayers' Club. If I fall in this glorious strife, I know that amongst you I shall find many who will avenge me."

The colonel advanced and held out his hand. Everest shook it respectfully and murmured,—

"Thanks, colonel. You may trust me to do my duty."



examined the shikaris, and who cleaned and got ready the guns.

Thanks to his energy, he was able, when they sat down to breakfast next morning, to announce that all the preliminaries were arranged.

"At last," he exclaimed, "the famous King-of-the-tigers will find out who he has got to talk to! The Maharajah may get out his lac of rupees. The tigerskin is ready!"

"Not just yet," said Everest, smiling.

"It is just the same thing," said the sanguine Marseillais. "I tell you the tiger is ours. Besides, you know I owe you one for the day when you shot one of the brutes in the back; and I warn you that if at the first shot you don't bowl over this phenomenal tiger, I'll make it my business to cut in; and bang! I run off with the tigerskin!"

"My dear Barbarou," said the young man, "I regret to upset your plans, but I have made up my mind to try this adventure alone."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Barbarou. "And am I to do nothing?"

"Again I regret to refuse you," answered Everest firmly; "but I will take Latchman with me, as he volunteered to carry the guns. The club has entrusted me with the mission of attacking alone, and the first, our common enemy, and I share the honour with nobody."

"Excuse me for having insisted," said Barbarou, with an expression of grief on his face that did not escape his lordship, who hastened to add,—

"You know, Barbarou, I like you too well to

wish to give you the least pain; but really I feel that, in such circumstances, I must be quite free in my movements. General Butnot said to me yesterday, 'Take a leaf out of my experience—go alone. When you are engaged with such a formidable enemy never have anybody to think about but yourself.'"

"If Butnot told you that," replied Barbarou regretfully, "I bow to his long experience. I should not wish to be a check on you, and possibly bring you to grief."

However, at the close of this conversation Barbarou took Holbeck aside, and they had a long and mysterious interview.

From the day that the King-of-the-tigers had so unexpectedly appeared at the picnic in the Palace of Pearls the royal shikaris had not lost trace of him for a moment. They knew for certain that the monster had retired to an almost inaccessible gorge in the immediate neighbourhood of the Maharajah's summer palace. Sleeping amongst the rocks during the day, he only left his retreat at night to carry off some cow or buffalo from the neighbouring plain.

Latchman, who was a shikari of great experience and ability, went himself to survey the ground. On his return he told Everest that it seemed impossible for him to devise a hiding-place anywhere near the tiger's haunt, and, on the other hand, such was the terror the animal had inspired amongst the natives that even the bravest of them refused to act as beaters. There was thus only one way left, and that a most dangerous one. It was to enter the tiger's retreat in broad daylight

and endeavour to hunt out the monster, who was sure to be in hiding amongst the rocks.

"That will do," was Everest's answer to the khitmatgar. "I will go to-morrow with you, and you must bring me face to face with the fellow."

"I will do my best," said Latchman, "but I cannot guarantee that I shall not be frightened if the tiger appears suddenly. You must not be angry with me if my heart fails me."

"When you have handed me the gun that you will have with you, you can run as fast as your legs can carry you," said Everest, with a smile.

That evening the young lord did not visit the club. Once he was left alone, he sat in deep thought for a few minutes, and then having called his faithful John, he gave him minute instructions as to what he should do in case he should be killed on the morrow. He rapidly wrote down his last wishes on a paper which he handed to his devoted servant, and as the latter could not help letting fall a few tears at the sight of these mournful preparations, the young lord said to him with a laugh,—

"Don't cry, John. I hope in place of black gloves and crape you will have to ornament your button-hole with a white favour."

"May Heaven grant it so!" said the servant.

In the morning, at the first streaks of dawn, Latchman awoke Everest as he lay fast asleep.

The young man sprang out of bed, put on his grey suit, examined his cartridges, and arranged them in order.

He took with him his excellent double-barrel and his heavy rifle, his principal arm of defence,

which Latchman was to hand to him at the last moment.

All these preparations took place in deep silence. Latchman waited at the door of the tent with two horses, and Everest was just leaving when Holbeck and Barbarou suddenly appeared.

"What!" said the doctor reproachfully, "were you going off in that way without saying good-bye?"

"I did not like to wake you up uselessly," answered the young man, with some embarrassment. In reality he wished to avoid any scene at his departure.

"Hunters' superstition!" said Barbarou. "You were afraid of hearing our cautions and wishes. For my part, I have remarked that whenever they have wished me good sport I have invariably returned with an empty bag."

"I am not superstitious," replied Everest, laughing. "I expect to come back to-night with a bag full."

Having warmly shaken hands with his two friends, he jumped into the saddle, and, followed by Latchman, soon disappeared among the trees in the avenue.

"Let him get on a little," said Holbeck to Barbarou, and they entered the tent. But an hour afterwards the doctor was up on his peaceful mule, and off at a gentle trot in company with the Marseillais.

As they reached the gate of the Armoudjan park they met the colonel out for his morning stroll.

"Off so early!" he exclaimed to the doctor.

"I have heard of a magnificent ant-hill a few

miles away from here," answered Holbeck, "and I am going to explore it to-day, while Barbarou does a little bird-shooting."

"And your friend Mr. Everest?" asked the colonel.

"He went away an hour ago."

"Ah!" said the officer simply; and he saluted the horsemen. But as he looked after them as they rode off, he said to himself,—

"What does the Marseillais want with that heavy gun? It would do for shooting elephants better than birds."

After a gallop of a couple of hours, Everest and Latchman rode up to the shikaris, who were waiting for them at the entrance to the forest. They alighted, and, leaving their horses in charge of one of the men, followed their guides into the jungle.

For more than three miles they advanced with great difficulty among the rocks and bushes, and then they found themselves on the edge of a kind of amphitheatre, girdled by a vast fissure in the hill's flank. The clear-cut sides of the chasm rose bare and inaccessible, and the narrow space between was covered with huge detached blocks and a few stunted shrubs.

"That is where the King-of-the-tigers is," said one of the shikaris, pointing with his hand towards the bottom of the ravine. "I saw him myself this very morning walking along that path."

"The gorge is very narrow, but it seems rather long," said Everest to the shikari. "Can you tell me whereabouts the tiger is likely to be?"

"That awful place," said the native, "is the



haunt of mousters and demons, and has never been trodden by the foot of man. We call it the Valley of Death. Look, sahib, even the birds avoid flying across it. My beard is white, and since first I had a tooth in my jaw I have lived in the jungle, but never have I come to this spot without fear. Listen to me, do not be rash, nor brave the anger of the divine Siva in pursuing his son into this sacred place. Wait till the tiger comes out, and then you can slay him."

As he heard these words Latchman could not repress a shudder.

"If you are afraid," said Everest, "you can go. But I am resolved to descend the ravine," And addressing the shikari, he continued, "I did not ask you for advice. Do your duty, and show me the way that leads to the tiger."

"I obey," answered the native. "The way is before you. It is down this narrow valley that the waters of the heavens have carved in the flanks of the hill. You must follow the watercourse among the rocks. When you are at the other end a wider and easier road will lead you out, if the Deotas permit you to advance so far."

Without waiting for further gloomy warnings from the old shikari, Everest took his gun in his left hand, letting himself down by his right into the ravine. When he had reached the bottom Latchman followed in the same manner; but when he was a yard or two from the ground he slipped and fell at Everest's feet, while the gun he carried went down with a crash among the stones. The young lord picked up the rifle, to see if it were injured, and it appeared all right.

Both men then resumed their advance along the rocky path. The sun shed its fiery rays down on to the ash-coloured masses, which, never cooled by the night breeze, were now so hot that the naked hand could not rest upon them.

A dazzling bluish vapour hung in the valley, and the terrible malaria tainted the air. Over all reigned the silence of death, only broken now and then by the noisy flight of some bird-beetle as it swept across on its metallic wings.

Everest found his breathing grow slow and laboured. For an instant he felt that he must give in, and he retreated up the rocks to escape the hurtful influence of the malaria.

"The old shikari," he said to himself, "was right. The place is accursed."

But he soon conquered his weakness and rejoined Latchman, who, more accustomed to the poisonous atmosphere, seemed to suffer but little from it.

Advancing with great care, they searched among the rocks and the bushes—in every place where the tiger was likely to lie.

They had been thus engaged for about an hour, when they saw in front of them the declivity which ended the gorge.

"The King-of-the-tigers is not here," said Latchman. "At this time of the day he would never let us pass him without attacking us. The man-eater never likes to be disturbed."

Everest made no reply; he was greatly disappointed to find that once again the wary animal had defied pursuit.

At this moment a shadow swept along the

bottom of the ravine, and the young lord, looking up, thought he saw a human form among the trees that capped the crest of the precipice.

"One of the shikaris watching us," said Latchman, whom the incident had not escaped. "Perhaps they wish to tell us something."

"No," answered Everest. "Don't answer; the noise will wake the tiger, and, as you say, scare him away."

They had reached the end of the chasm. The walls ran down to the level with a sudden slope, and among the scattered rock masses at the foot rose a few big trees.

"If the tiger is not over there," whispered Latchman, pointing to the clump, "we may give up all thoughts of meeting him."

The words were scarcely out of the khitmatgar's mouth before Everest uttered an exclamation of surprise. There, about twenty paces in front of him, a colossal tiger was crouching amongst the rocks!

It was, in truth, the long-sought-for King-of-the-tigers himself.

The monster seemed to be waiting for his foes. Stretched across the narrow way that led out of the gorge, he cut off all possibility of flight.

Everest's surprise lasted but for a second. He was again master of himself, and planting himself firmly on his feet, he grasped his gun. But the position in which the tiger lay prevented his aiming at the vulnerable point near the shoulder.

Growling like an angry cat, the monster never moved. It was a splendid sight to see him there coolly watching, and superbly confident in his

strength. His long tail, ringed with black and gold, in regular cadence slowly and silently beat against his zebraed flanks as if he scorned these men who had been rash enough to enter the domain of this valley of death.

But the deed must be done. Everest quickly brought his rifle to the shoulder; the tiger as suddenly rose to his feet. There was a flash, and then the report.

With a fearful roar, which re-echoed along the ravine, the monster, struck full in the chest, rolled on to the ground. For an instant his paws beat the air, and his wide opening mouth appeared to be rending some invisible foe.

“Wah, wah!” exclaimed Latchman; “the Bagh Rajah is dead!”

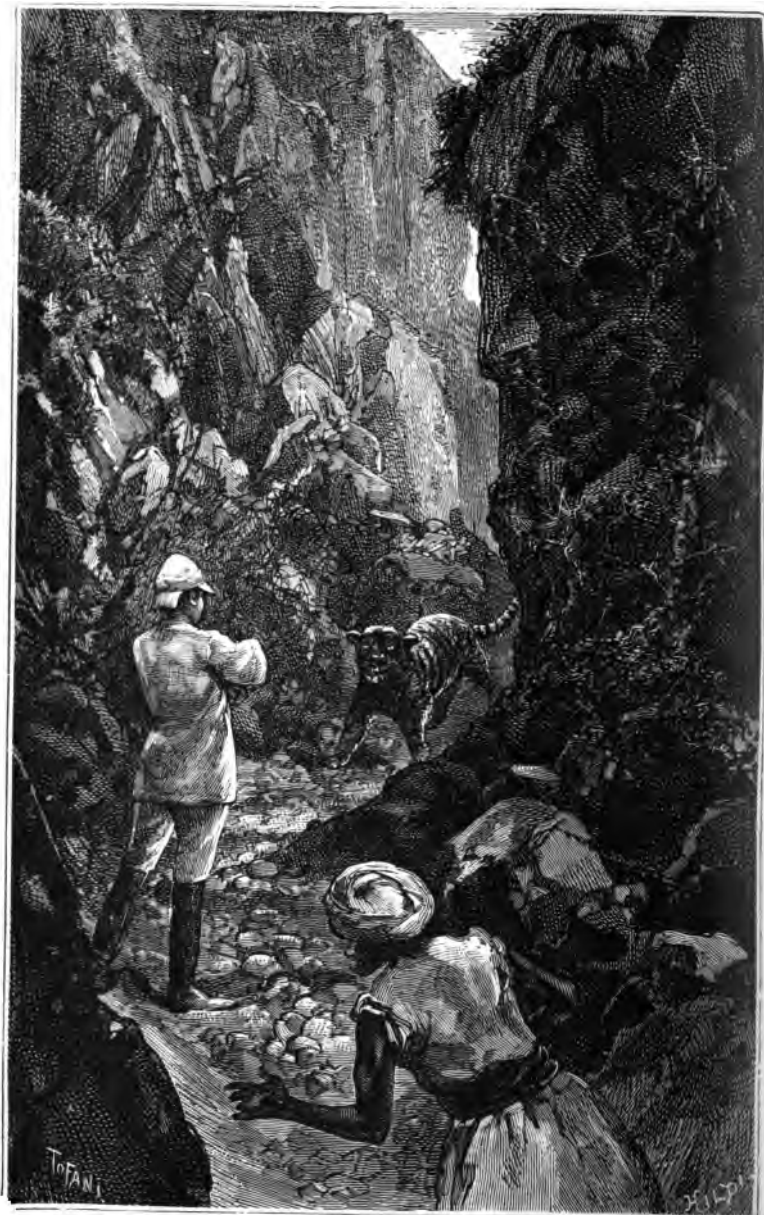
Everest, excited by this remark, and also by the sight of the tiger in, as he thought, his death-struggle, made a step forward and let fly his second barrel. But in the excitement of his triumph he aimed too high, and the bullet struck a rock just above his mark, as he could see by the splinters that showered off.

This fresh attack seemed to recall the tiger to life. In spite of his wound, he rose and faced his enemies. And more than that, he changed his tactics, and with another growl, and his mouth wide open, he advanced straight on to Everest.

The young lord had thrown away his gun, and snatched his heavy rifle from the hands of Latchman, who as soon as he had got rid of it, ran off as fast as his legs could carry him.

Everest turned on to the tiger, who was not twenty paces off and continued to advance.





Crossing his arms, he waited for death.

The young man shouldered his gun, and without hurry and with admirable coolness aimed at the tiger's chest, so that the second bullet would enter the wound made by the first.

This time he must conquer or die.

Everest pressed the trigger. With a sharp click the hammer fell, but there was no report.

Feverishly the young man snapped back the hammer. A rapid glance showed him that the pin of the cartridge had been twisted, probably when Latchman had dropped the gun. Everest was disarmed. The rifle was but a useless burden. Forgetting in his despair that a few days before he had driven back the same adversary with a mere boxwood croquet mallet, he threw the gun angrily away among the bushes. Then crossing his arms, he waited for death.

The tiger advanced with measured steps, cautiously, as if fearing some surprise. His flaming eyes were fixed on those of the young man. It seemed as though the monster recognized him, and grinned with joy.

Then, fascinated by this appalling look, Everest fancied that death itself was before him. It was no longer a tiger that was approaching, but one of those fantastic beings that the pencil of Holbein or Callot has revealed.

The monster rose, and his hideous throat, vomiting forth flames, cried out,—

“Welcome, noble and puissant Lord Everest. I have waited for you long, but now I answer to your call. Here am I ready to tear your body to pieces, and to free your soul from the prison you think so cruel. Now you can be happy, if death

alone can satisfy you. Your ingratitude can meet its reward. God gave you your health and strength. He made you noble. He heaped on you gifts that other men desire—fortune, honours, titles. All these were not enough for your pride.”

And a prey to this frightful illusion, it seemed as though a white girlish figure rose between him and the monster, and stretching out her arms, implored him in a suppliant voice,—

“Mercy for him! Mercy for his ingratitude, for his blindness! for he has been alone amongst men, and his heart has never known a mother’s love nor a father’s sympathy.”

But the insatiable monster answered,—

“No pity for him. His heart is unchanged. He must die.”

Suddenly Everest felt the brute’s eyes flaming into his. He gave one long piercing shriek of despair, and with his bosom torn by the mighty claws of the King-of-the-tigers, he fell lifeless among the rocks of the Valley of Death.







On a litter borne by four shikaris.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE TIGERSKIN.

GREAT was the consternation at the Armoudjan when the body of the unfortunate Everest arrived on a litter borne by four shikaris. His two faithful friends, Holbeck and Barbarou, came with it.

Colonel Shaughnessy, whom a messenger had informed of the fatal event, met the mournful procession.

"Well?" he said to the doctor as soon as he saw him.

"He is not dead," answered Holbeck sadly, "but he has almost gone."

The sportsmen who had assembled raised their hats in respect as the litter went by. One of the

rooms in the pavilion had been prepared in all haste, and thither the unfortunate young man was carried.

Once Everest was placed on the bed, Holbeck proceeded to examine and dress the wounds. When he had taken off the tattered clothes that covered the chest, all dripping with blood, the bystanders uttered a cry of horror. The monster's claws had traced a double furrow down the young lord's body.

Without troubling himself much about this, the doctor examined the wounds one after the other. He washed them carefully with a sponge which he from time to time dipped in a basin of phenic water held by Barbarou. Then he proceeded to dress them with bandages steeped in a weak solution of perchloride of iron so as to stop the bleeding. That done, he examined the rest of the body. With the exception of a few contusions and slight ecchymosis, due to the fall on the rocks, there was no trace of a wound. Then he listened to the beating of the heart, made some observations with the stethoscope, and felt the pulse.

And then he gave a deep sigh of relief, and in a voice that was almost joyful said to the men who were waiting anxiously by,—

“I see no wound that will endanger his life. The tiger's claws have dug into the flesh, but no essential organ is injured. I think I can assure you that Mr. Everest will get off with a few glorious wounds, and that in a week he will be on his legs again.”

“Heaven be praised !” exclaimed the colonel,

and in a burst of joy understood only by Holbeck he fervently shook the doctor's hand.

Barbarou, who had up to then kept quite a stoic impassibility, as soon as he heard the doctor's hopeful words set down the basin he held in his hand, and, hurrying to a corner of the room, burst out crying like a child.

"However," added Holbeck, "the lad has received a shock from which his recovery must be slow. He is now in a fever, and his pulse, although it is very feeble, is marking about a hundred and forty. That means he must have rest and silence."

The visitors quitted the room. As they went out the colonel gave the most stringent orders to stop all noise in the vicinity of the room.

That evening at the Tigerslayers' Club Everest was the only subject of conversation.

The majority of the sportsmen confessed that they would never have dared to pursue the terrible man-eater into the malarious gorge.

"It was a heroic folly!" exclaimed Butnot; "and if Everest escapes, I propose that, in spite of his apparent failure, we vote him our felicitations and have his name inscribed in letters of gold on the front of the palace of the Armoudjan by the side of that of his brave companion, our friend Barbarou."

"I decline the honour, gentlemen," said the sailor. "The sole, the true hero of the struggle was Mr. Everest."

All this time Holbeck, sitting by the side of Everest, was doing his utmost to allay the delirium which had taken possession of his patient.

Everest in his wanderings was still troubled by the frightful hallucinations that had come over him at the finish of the drama in which he had succumbed. Betrothed to death, he dreamt that he celebrated his funereal espousals among innumerable hideous monsters, who tore him with their talons, trampled him with their feet, and inflicted on him a thousand refinements of torture. It was with difficulty that the doctor, with the assistance of John and Latchman, could keep the unfortunate young man in his bed.

Barbarou, returning from the club, where he had been obliged to put in an appearance, opportunely came in to their aid, and then the wanderer was mastered, and, fatigued with his long struggle, fell asleep.

The khitmatgar, greatly agitated at these events, was permitted to retire, and the two naturalists, aided by the faithful John, remained to watch over their young friend.

In this manner the night passed, broken by terrible attacks of delirium succeeded by periods of calm.

At daylight the colonel entered the room. That excellent man had passed a most agitated night, and, under pretext of bringing lint and bandages prepared by the ladies, had come to inquire after the patient.

"The attacks of fever," said the doctor, "are of such intensity that I never saw an approach to before. The effect of the malaria is evidently telling and complicating the case, and making it much more serious than I expected. In fact, my only hope is in the vigorous constitution of the patient."

"You alarm me, doctor," said the colonel.

"That was not my intention," said Holbeck; "but I am surprised, and a little nonplussed, I confess."

"His Highness, in making inquiries after Mr. Everest yesterday," replied the colonel, "gave me some information which may be of use to you. It seems that the ravine where our young friend went after the tiger is pestilential, and no man has hitherto entered it with impunity. Shut in on all sides by high walls of rock, situated among dense woods, the chasm is half filled during the winter by the rain-water. This evaporates with prodigious rapidity as soon as the warm weather returns, and then the vapour, charged with miasma, remains floating above the heated cauldron, where a breeze never blows. You doubtless know how sensitive other Europeans are to the influence of the malaria, the mere breathing of it for a few seconds being often enough to make them feel the effects for some time after. So it is quite a miracle that Everest ever came out of the place alive. In another hour the King-of-the-tigers would have found only an inanimate corpse to feed upon. Even the natives do not escape, and as a proof of this there is Latchman, who is now down with an attack of fever, which came on a few hours ago."

"Now I see clearly what is the matter," said Holbeck, "I can set to work more surely. Fortunately there is a good supply here of sulphate of quinine, and I shall use a good deal of it. With care, we may withdraw Everest from the claws of this new tiger, the Indian Fever, who is

more to be dreaded than the King-of-the-tigers himself."

"Once more may Heaven help you!" said the old officer. "When I think that I am the chief cause of this misfortune, I shall never forgive myself if the lad dies. And I may tell you that I am not the only one at home that has been praying for his recovery."

"Oh! well," answered Holbeck quickly, "if that is so, I promise to save him for his happiness, for your happiness, and for—mine."

The struggle was long and bitter. For six days the fever continued its resistance to powerful quinine doses and constant nursing. But at length the victory remained with Holbeck, who, helped by Barbarou, remained in the breach, untiring and relentless, and taking but the least possible repose.

The seventh day passed without any attack, and Everest came back to life, but his mind could not bear a sudden shock. He recognized his two faithful friends, but seemed to have no remembrance of the terrible events that had brought him to his bed of sickness.

Holbeck carefully avoided everything that could cause excitement, and had even forbidden all visits from members of the colony. Even the poor colonel found himself excluded.

The doctor now changed the treatment, and busied himself in enabling the patient to regain his strength. Then, little by little, he tried to piece together the chain of his ideas.

A fortnight had elapsed. Everest, supported on Barbarou's arm, walked as far as the large

verandah surrounding the pavilion. There he lay back in a large arm-chair.

The sun setting behind the Mahadeo hills was purpling with its fiery rays the summits of the tall trees in the Armoudjan. Swarms of parakeets were flying about the trees, alighting on the branches, and circling away again, filling the air with their chatter and their flashes of colour.

Everest sat watching the movements of these graceful birds.

"Barbarou," said he suddenly, "I am afraid the Mennevals will be rather dissatisfied with you. It seems to me that it has been a long time since you went after the birds they are so fond of."

"What?" replied the Marseillais. "On the contrary; since you have been ill I have been laying in a rare stock."

"Ah!" answered Everest; "then I have been ill for some time?"

"Not at all, my dear friend," said Holbeck instantly. "A slight attack of fever. Of no importance."

The young man pondered. He was seeking the key of the mystery, and feeling his way.

The doctor anxiously watched the progress of the awakening, which ever since the morning he had foreseen. To meet it he had arranged a little scheme, on which all his hopes depended; but he could not without apprehension see the time approach in which it was to be put in execution.

Suddenly there came a sound of footsteps on the marble floor of the verandah.

The doctor rose to receive the visitors, and returned to the young man, saying, "Some friends of yours wish to shake hands with you."

"Friends!" said Everest slowly. "Except you and Barbarou, I have no friends in this world."

As he ended the colonel stood before him, and holding out his hand, said, "And I? You had led me to hope that I was to be considered as one."

Everest looked at the colonel for a moment, and then he made an exclamation, as if the veil which hid his eyes had been suddenly drawn aside.

"Ah! now I remember," he murmured. Then, hiding his face in his hands, as if he would again plunge into the forgetfulness of the past, he added, "It is cruel of you to remind me of my sorrow. I have been presumptuous, and God has punished my pride. Why need I tell you what you know better than I? From the game in which I staked the happiness of my life I return humbled and vanquished."

"How vanquished?" exclaimed the colonel, with affected surprise.

"Yes, sir," answered the young man bitterly; "I did as do the fools and the presumptuous that the fable tells of—I sold the tigerskin before—"

But he never finished the phrase. At the moment, like an apparition, Mary Shaughnessy stood before him, her dainty hands struggling to hold up a huge mass of fur, striped black and gold. And as she lifted it she said, "You are libelling yourself, sir. Here is the skin of the famous King-of-the-tigers which you killed. Dr. Holbeck gave it to me on your behalf, and, with





"Here is the skin of the famous King-of-the-tigers which you killed."



my father's consent, I have accepted it." Then, letting fall the skin, she stepped up to Everest as he rose, and, holding out her hands, added, with winning grace, "It was very foolish of you, but I forgive you with all my heart."

Everest could hardly believe in his happiness; it had been so sudden and unexpected. He took the girl's hand in his, and, overcome with emotion, fell back into his chair, powerless to say anything but "Thank you."

And then the doctor intervened. "Now, my friends, you have shown him the tigerskin, and I must ask you to go, for he now belongs to me. Lengthened visits are strictly forbidden."

"Holbeck," said Everest, when the colonel and his daughter had gone, "it seems to me that all that has just passed is a dream. Tell me that I am alive, in full possession of my reason, and that I really understood what Miss Shaughnessy said!"

"Yes, my dear boy," said Holbeck; "you are alive, and nearly completely cured. But no! I made a mistake. The Everest we used to know—the splenetic and the misanthrope, doubting himself and everybody else—is dead, stone dead; he was left, I hope, prostrate for ever beneath the claws of the King-of-the-tigers in the Valley of Death. In his place I have before me a new Everest, in full possession of himself, ready to accept the happiness with which a generous fate has endowed him—a man who knows that his friends love him for himself alone, for his generous qualities, and not for his title or his wealth."

"Yes," said Everest with much feeling; "you

are right. I know that up to now I have been very selfish and unworthy of my gifts. My eyes are opened to the truth which I found at the death I so foolishly sought. I then learnt my blindness and my ingratitude towards Him who had so blessed me. And I am unworthy of so much indulgence and so much happiness."

"Sincere repentance wipes away the past," answered Holbeck. "Be happy, for now you are worthy of being so."

And then Everest told his friends what had been his last thoughts when he found himself disarmed in front of the King-of-the-tigers.

"But," said he, as he finished, "explain how it is that I find myself here alive when I felt myself thrown backwards by the tiger. Did the fierce King-of-the-tigers spare me; or had I some talisman like that quarter of antelope which saved our friend Barbarou? And how did the tigerskin get here just now in Miss Shaughnessy's hands?"

"Softly," answered Holbeck. "One thing at a time. First, the tiger did jump on you, but—well, I hardly like to deprive Barbarou of the pleasure of telling the story in which he played the principal part."

"The principal part!" exclaimed Barbarou. "And you? But never mind; this is how it happened."

"You remember, Everest, that, in spite of my asking, you decided to go alone after the King-of-the-tigers. That suited neither Holbeck nor me. We arranged that we should let you get away, and follow you at a distance, to help you if you got into danger. I arranged with one of the

shikaris, and under his guidance we reached the entrance into the Valley of Death just as you slid down into the ravine. To follow you there would have been to risk embarrassing or annoying you, and while you went along the bottom of the gorge we kept along the crest of the precipice above you. From there none of your movements could escape us, while the bushes and trees hid us from your view. For an instant, however, as Holbeck was crossing a few yards of bare ground, his shadow was projected across your feet. I saw you lift your head, but happily the doctor had got under cover, and you could not see him.

"From our elevated position we discovered the tiger long before you could see him. The brute had heard you, and was waiting for you; evidently, instead of running, he intended to fight.

"I hurried off to get within range, but the rocks obliged us to go some distance round, and we had hardly got over half the space before I heard your first shot and then the second.

"This time, risking your seeing us, we ran as fast as we could down among the bushes and rolling stones. Thanks to my long legs, I was some distance in advance of Holbeck, and was the first to reach the end of the slope. As I did so, you had got your big gun up to your shoulder, and were preparing to send your last bullet into the tiger, who was marching straight on to you. I heard the sharp click as the hammer fell without exploding the cartridge, and to my indescribable horror I saw you throw away the useless gun, and await your enemy with your arms crossed.

"I was still too far off to use my rifle. Holbeck and I, mad with despair, set to work to shout and yell as we ran towards you. You did not hear us. The terrible poison of the valley had affected you.

"In a few moments the tiger was in front of you; he gave a growl and seized you in his talons and rolled with you on to the ground.

"My anguish was awful. I had the monster well within range, and yet I dared not fire, for both your bodies were in one heap.

"Holbeck never hesitated at all. Brandishing his umbrella, he rushed at the tiger. In vain I called on him to stop. I thought, God pardon me! that he was going to die with you."

"My brave friend!" said Everest, clasping the doctor's hand.

"The King-of-the-tigers, hearing our shouts and seeing Holbeck coming, rose and faced us defiantly. His mouth opened, he made two steps in advance. I did not wait for anything else. I aimed. Bang! Down went the brute with a growl.

"Without noticing the tiger, Holbeck flew to you, while I quietly glided up to the monster and gave him a crack on the ear with the butt-end of my gun, which split his skull for him. It rather damaged the skin, but Miss Shaughnessy tells me she likes it the better for it. Anyhow the King-of-the-tigers was dead enough. As for you, Holbeck had found that you still breathed. You know the rest. The shikaris, attracted by the firing, came running up. We made two litters. We put you on the first, and your enemy's corpse on the second. Before we left we looked about

for Latchman, and found him, fainted away, among the rocks in the ravine."

"But, then," exclaimed Everest, "it was you, my dear Barbarou, that killed the King-of-the-tigers!"

"Not at all," answered the sailor. "You remember what Cunningham told us about tigers being alive a quarter of an hour after they were dead? Well, that is what happened with your tiger. When we took off his skin and examined him we found that your first bullet had gone clean through his heart. It seems that all he did after you first hit him was but a series of reflex actions. But all that is too learned for me; I do not understand a word of it."

"And I want no other explanation," said Everest. "You two have saved my life, not only by drawing me from the claws of the King-of-the-tigers, but by dragging me away from my cruel, tormenting malady."





The Church at Serampore.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

A CALCUTTA NEWSPAPER.

Two months afterwards the following appeared in the *Times of India* :—

“The dramatic events which distinguished the gathering of our sportsmen at Mahavellipore under the patronage of H.H. Goulab Sing will be in the recollection of our readers. An enormous tiger, called by the natives the King-of-the-tigers, had been ravaging Gondvana, and was killed by one of the young members of the Mahavellipore Club, a Mr. Everest, assistant-naturalist to Dr. Holbeck’s expedition. The gallant sportsman very nearly paid for his victory with his life, and his inanimate body, covered with wounds, was snatched from beside the monster’s corpse. A



Calcutta letter now gives us some surprising news, which puts a romantic finish to this dramatic adventure.

“There was yesterday celebrated at the church at Serampore the marriage of Lord Everest, of Grosmore Castle, Yorkshire, with Miss Mary Shaughnessy, daughter of the gallant colonel of the Onety-twoth Bengal N.I.

“Our readers will have guessed that Dr. Holbeck’s assistant-naturalist and the noble lord are one and the same person. Lord Everest, wishing to take part incognito at the Mahavellipore gathering, had devised this little scheme with his friend Dr. Holbeck. His lordship came in search of the glory and excitement of the chase, and in the wild solitudes of Gondvana has found a young and charming bride, who by her beauty and accomplishments will be the pride of the ancient and noble family of Everest.

“The Governor-General and his lady honoured the wedding with their presence. Among the personages of distinction who were at the church we noticed Dr. Holbeck, Mr. Barbarou, the celebrated lion-slayer, General and Mrs Butnot, Mr. and Mrs. Peernose, Mr. and Mrs. Whatafter, Captain and Mrs. Benyon, Surgeon-Major Cunningham, and nearly all the rank and fashion of Calcutta.

“We wish the young couple every happiness.”

To this extract from the *Times of India* we add a few concluding sentences.

Everest remained in India for some time, and did not return to England until the colonel obtained a home appointment at the India Office.

Holbeck and Barbarou resolved to terminate their engagement with the Mennevals. The Mar-seillais could not decline the lakh of rupees which the Maharajah insisted on paying for the tiger-skin, and which Lord Everest insisted on handing over to him. With this little fortune Barbarou bought some land at Chandernagore, and promises to become one of the most active of our Indian planters. Holbeck took up his quarters with his adopted son, as he considered him. He continued his researches on *Cryptocerus* and *Myrmex mellifer*, and is preparing a voluminous memoir, which he intends to submit very shortly to the Academy of Sciences.

Poor Mrs. Peernose remains inconsolable at not having at the outset recognized the noble lord beneath—



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